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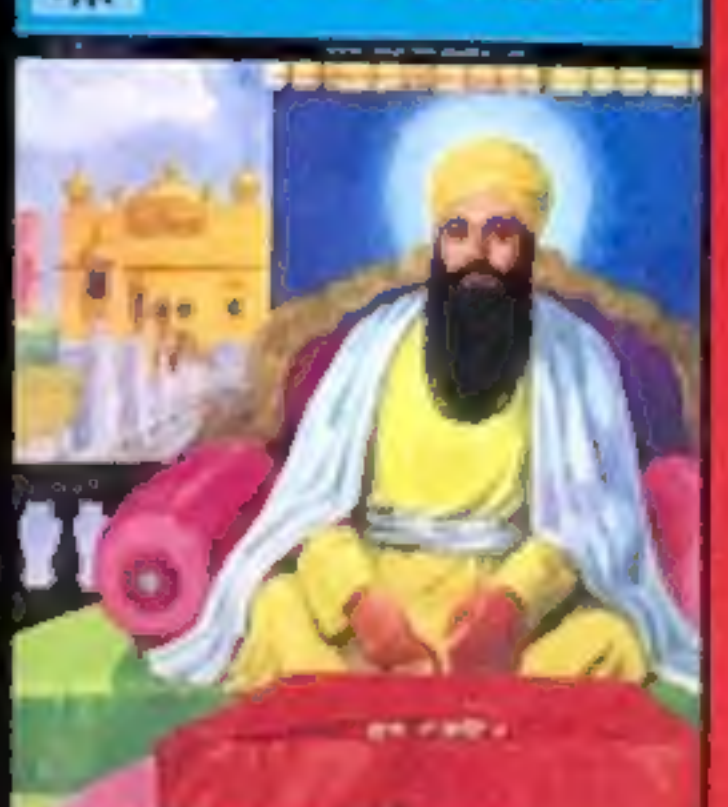
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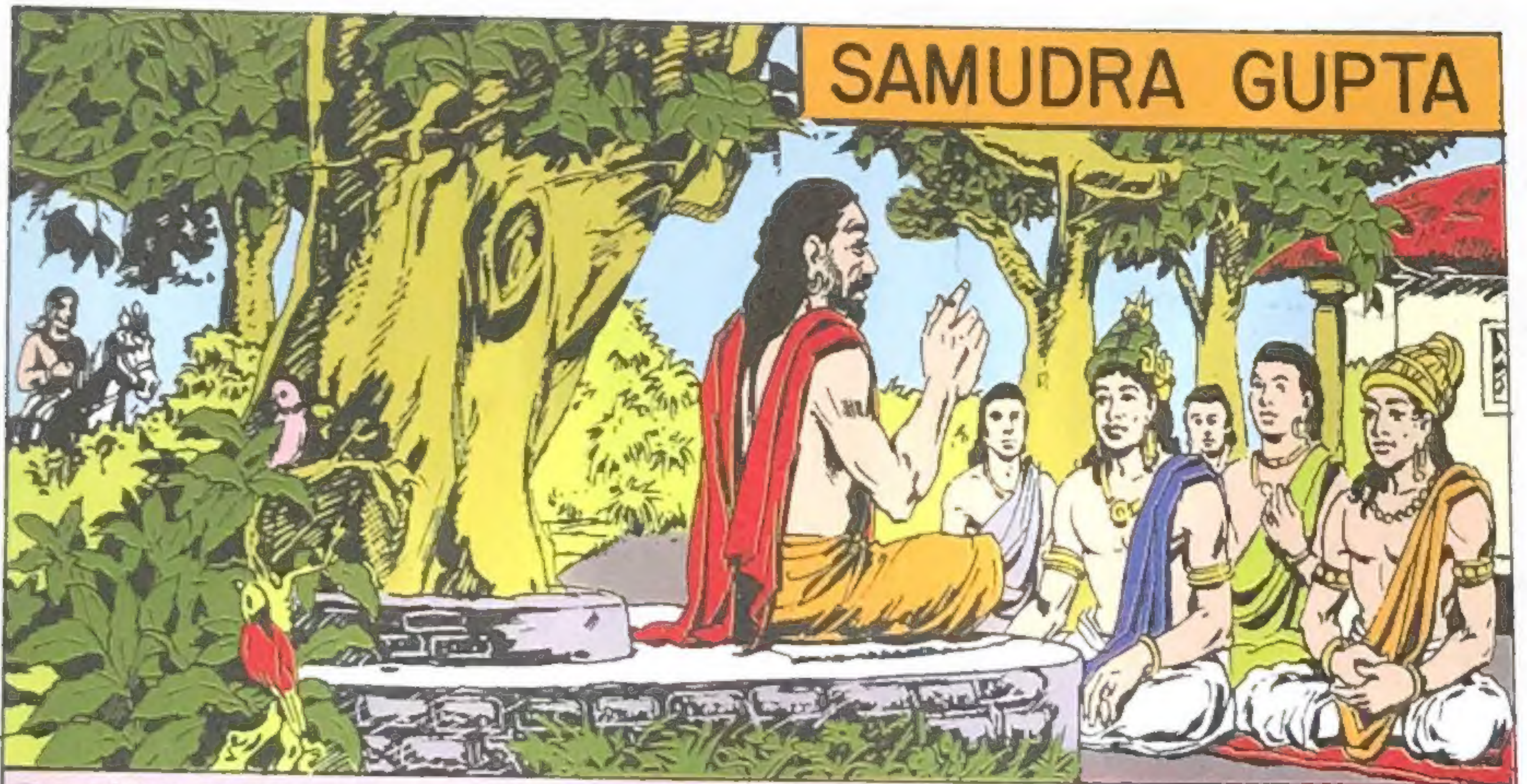


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SAMUDRA GUPTA



THE EARLY DECADES OF THE FOURTH CENTURY: THE SONS OF THE KING AND THE MINISTERS OF ANCIENT MAGADHA WERE LISTENING WITH RAPT ATTENTION TO THEIR GURU WHEN...

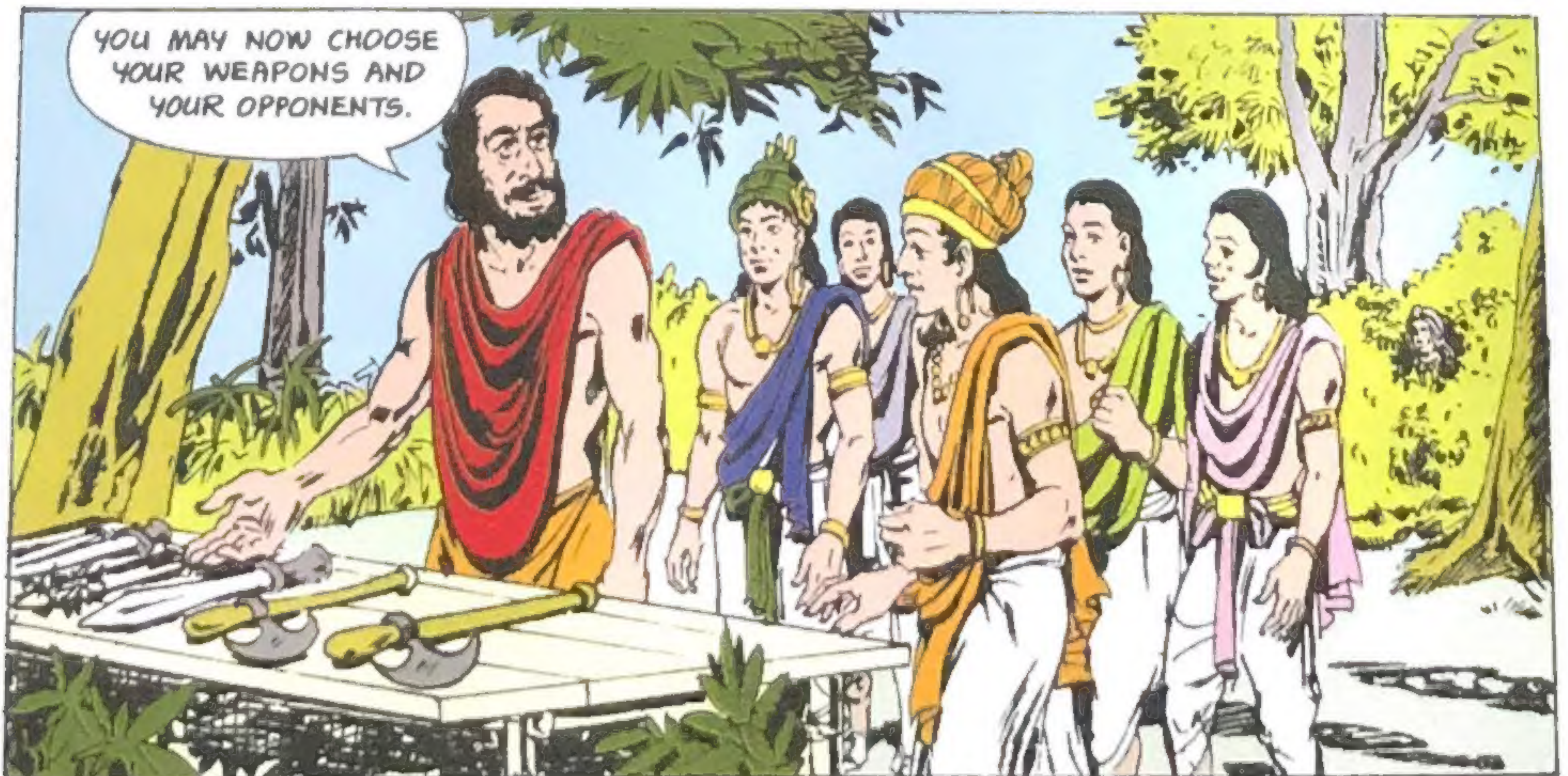
... CHANDRA GUPTA, THE KING OF MAGADHA, SILENTLY RODE UP, DISMOUNTED...



...AND HID HIMSELF BEHIND A BUSH.



YOU MAY NOW CHOOSE YOUR WEAPONS AND YOUR OPPONENTS.





THE KING OBSERVED HIS ELDEST SON, KACHA, WITH PRIDE.

SURELY, NONE CAN WIELD THE SWORD AS DEFTLY AS HE DOES!



BUT AS KACHA WARMED UP ...



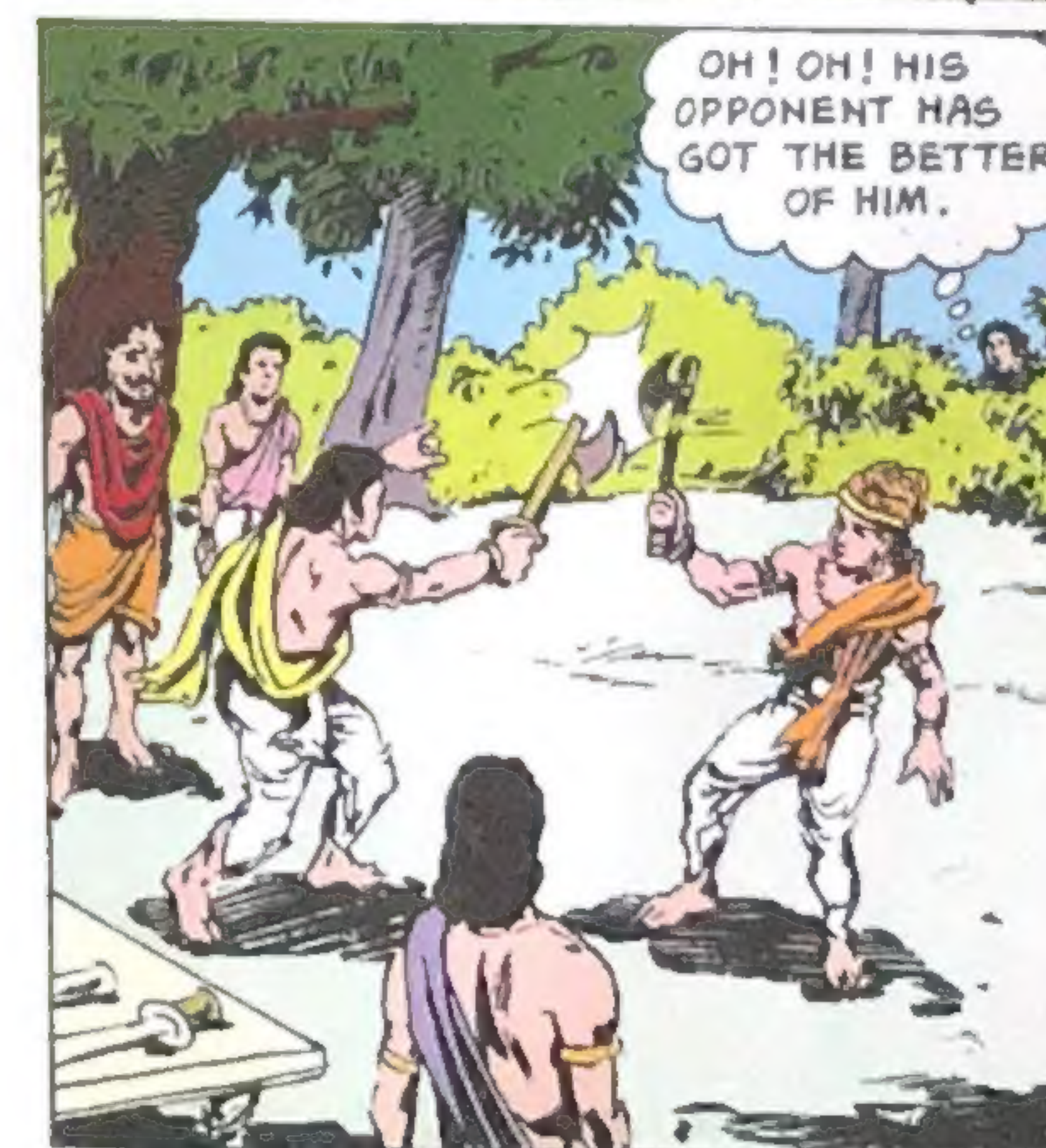
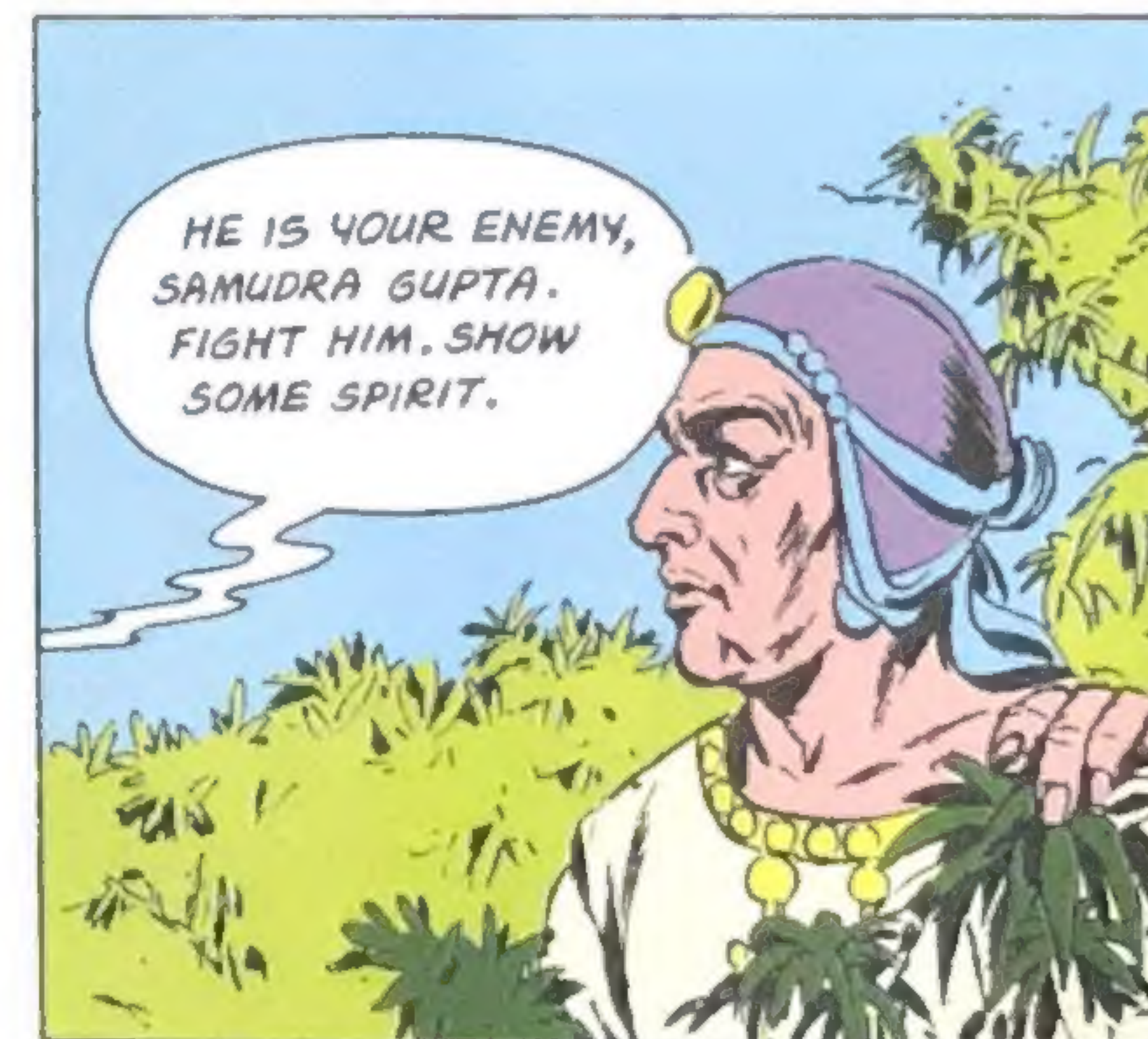
...CHANDRA GUPTA GREW ALARMED.

HE'S LOST CONTROL OF HIMSELF! HE'LL KILL HARISHENA!



THE GURU HOWEVER WAS ALERT.

KACHA!

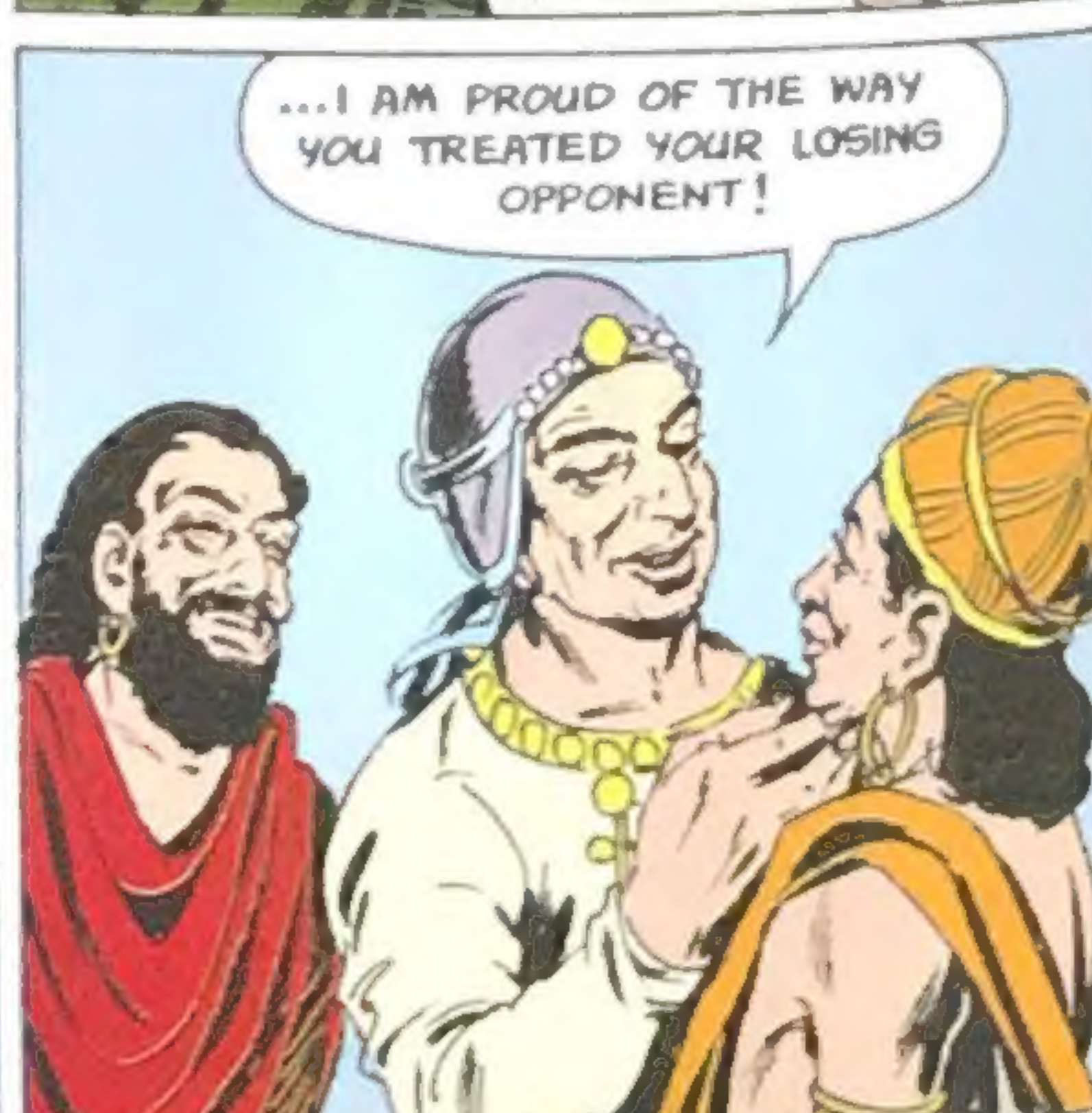




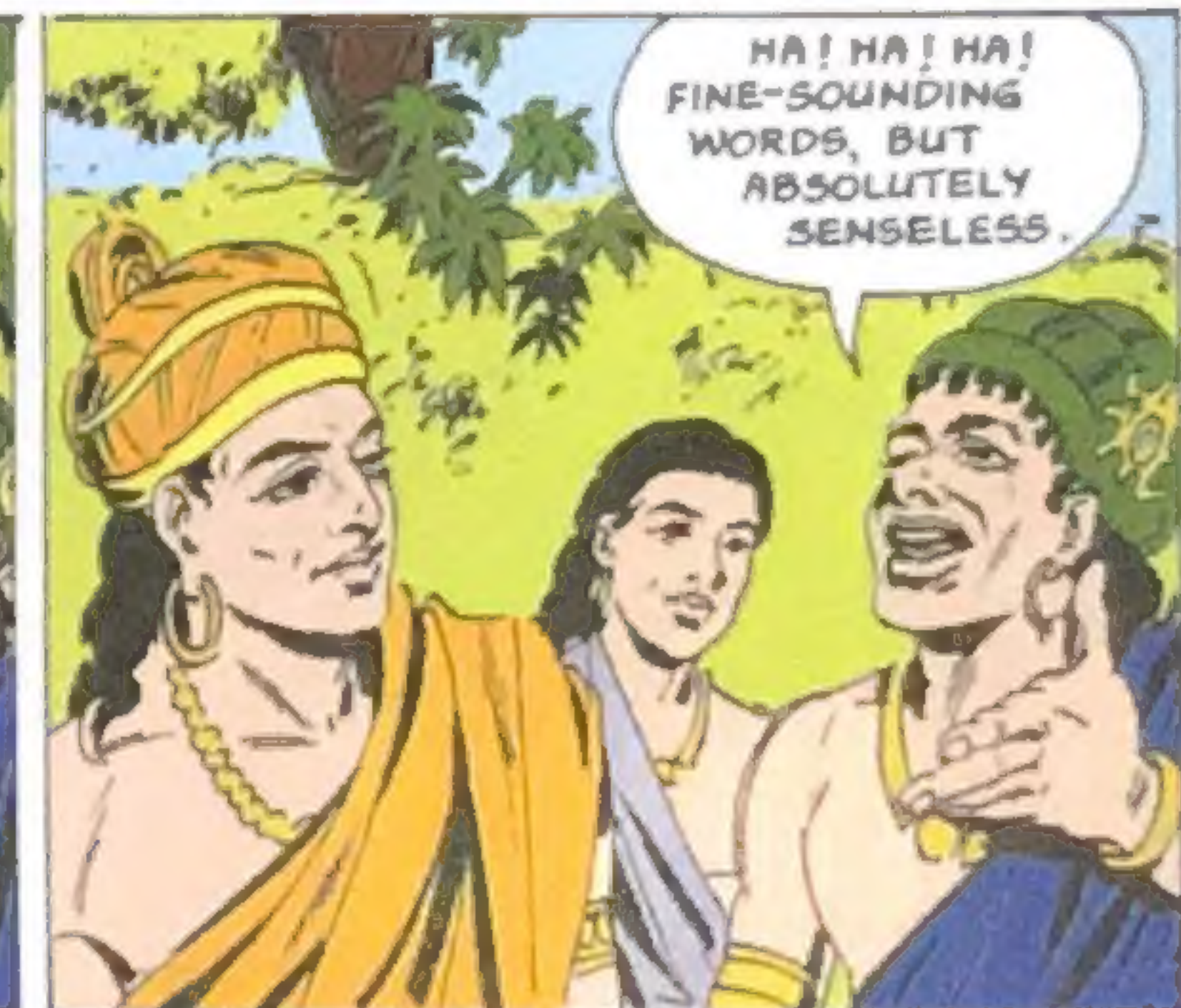
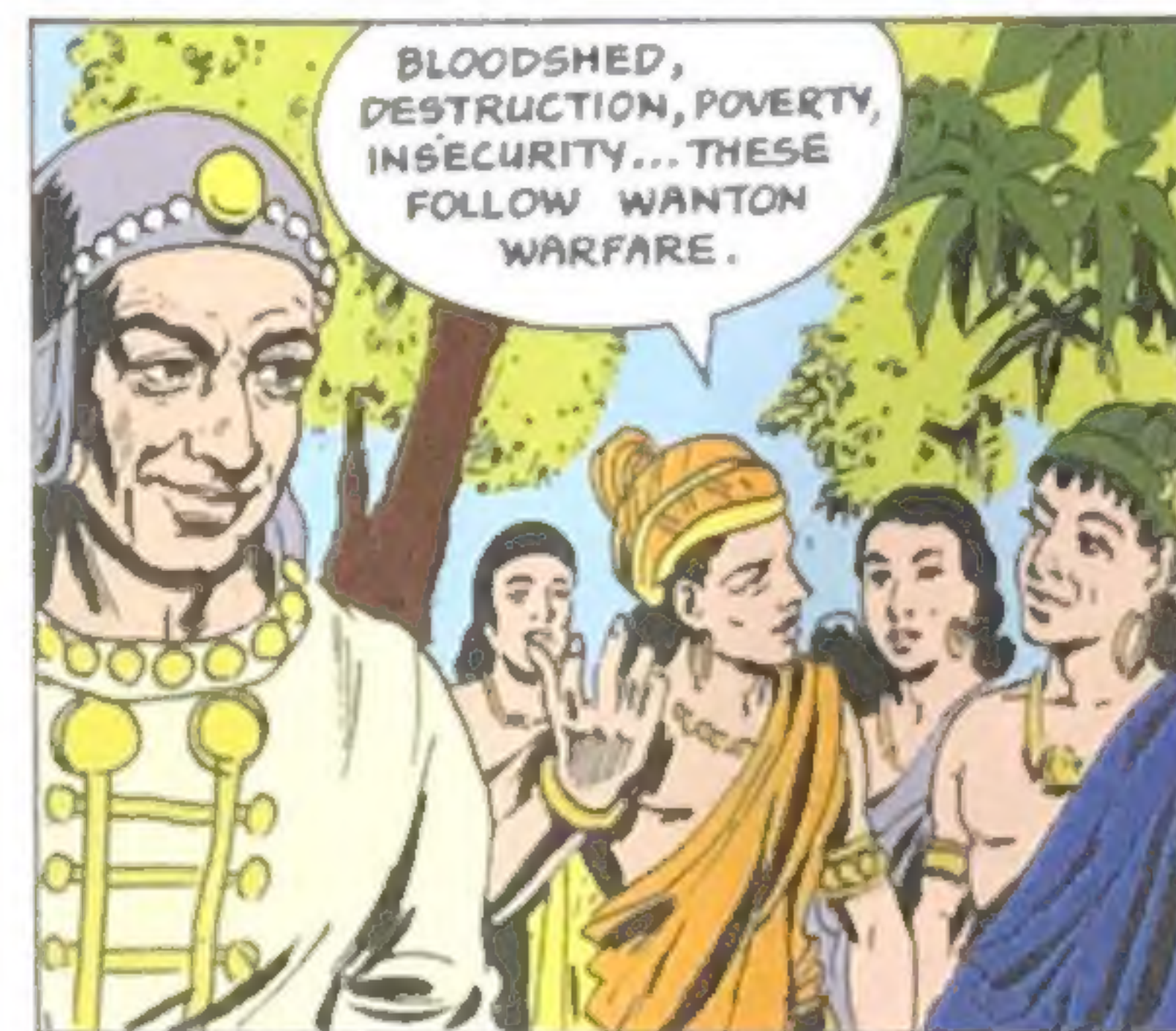
SUDDENLY SAMUDRA GUPTA FLUNG HIS AXE ASIDE ...

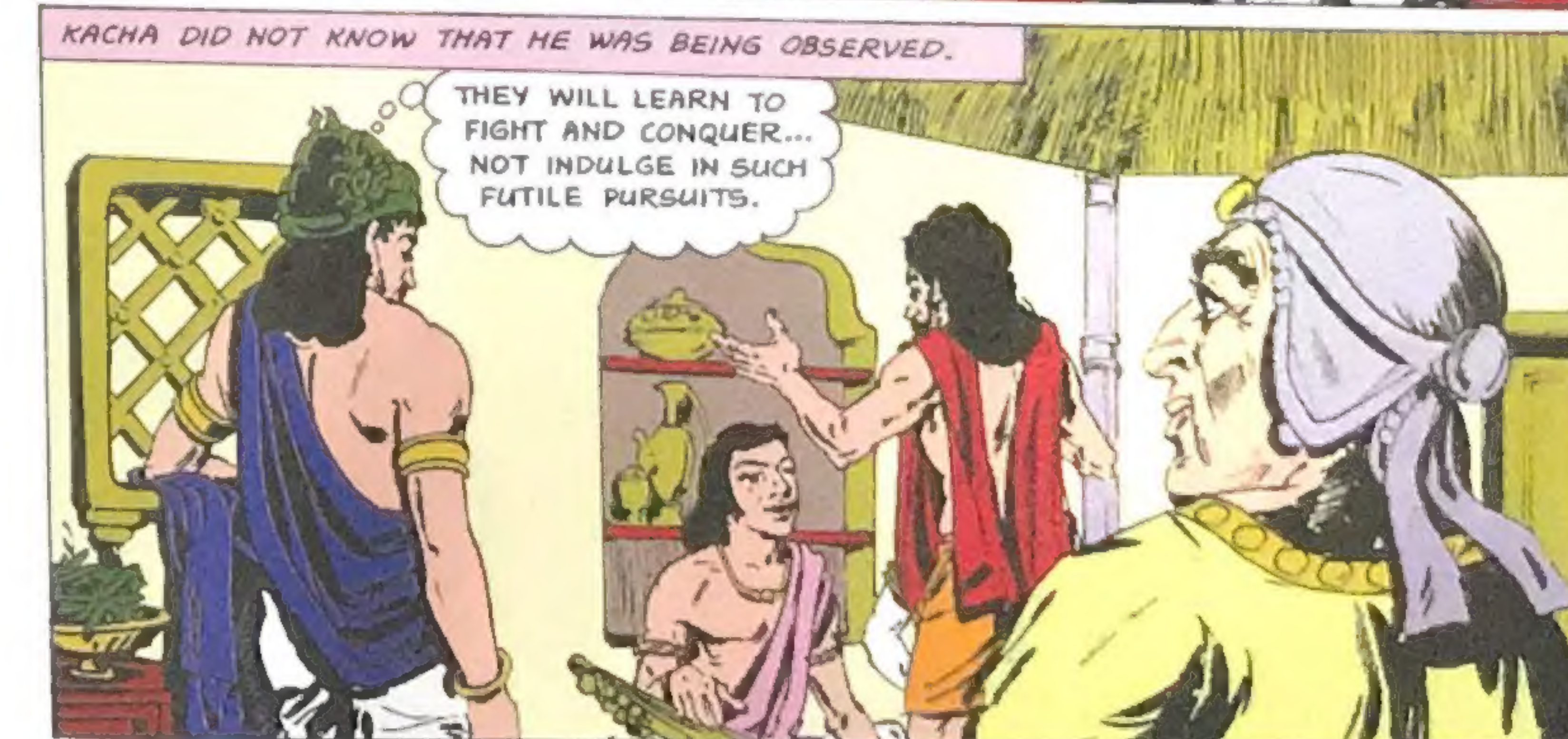
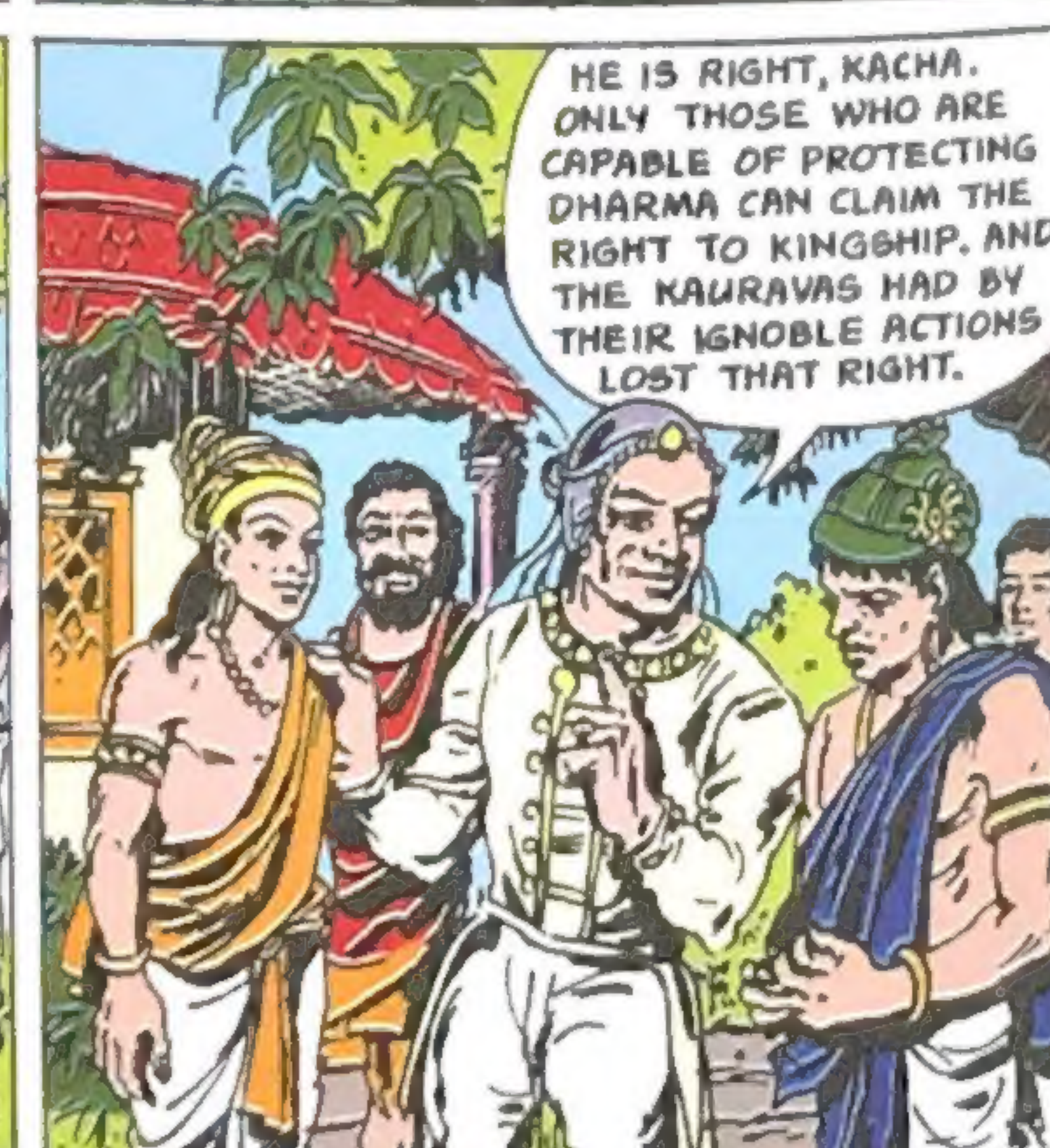
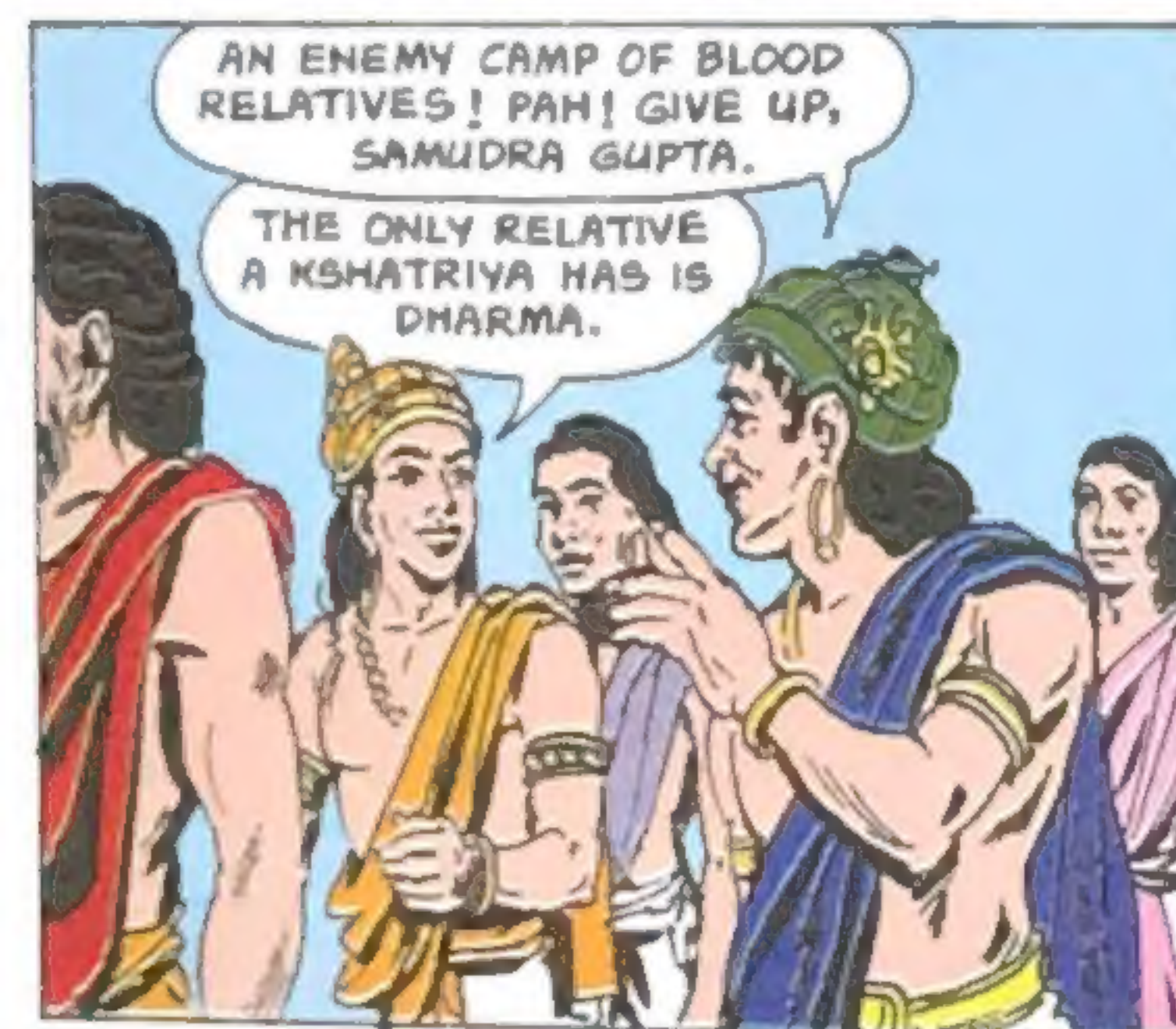
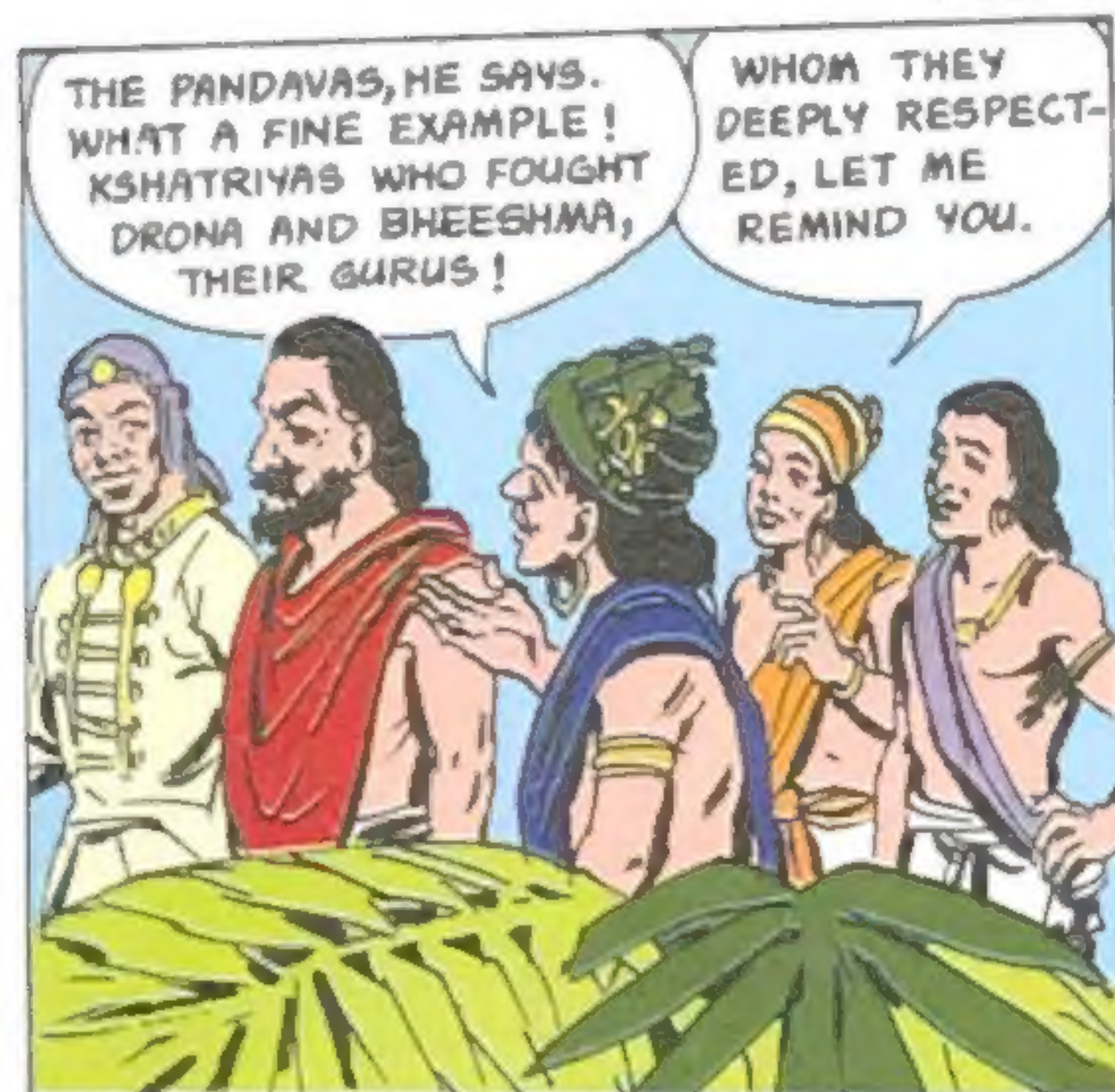


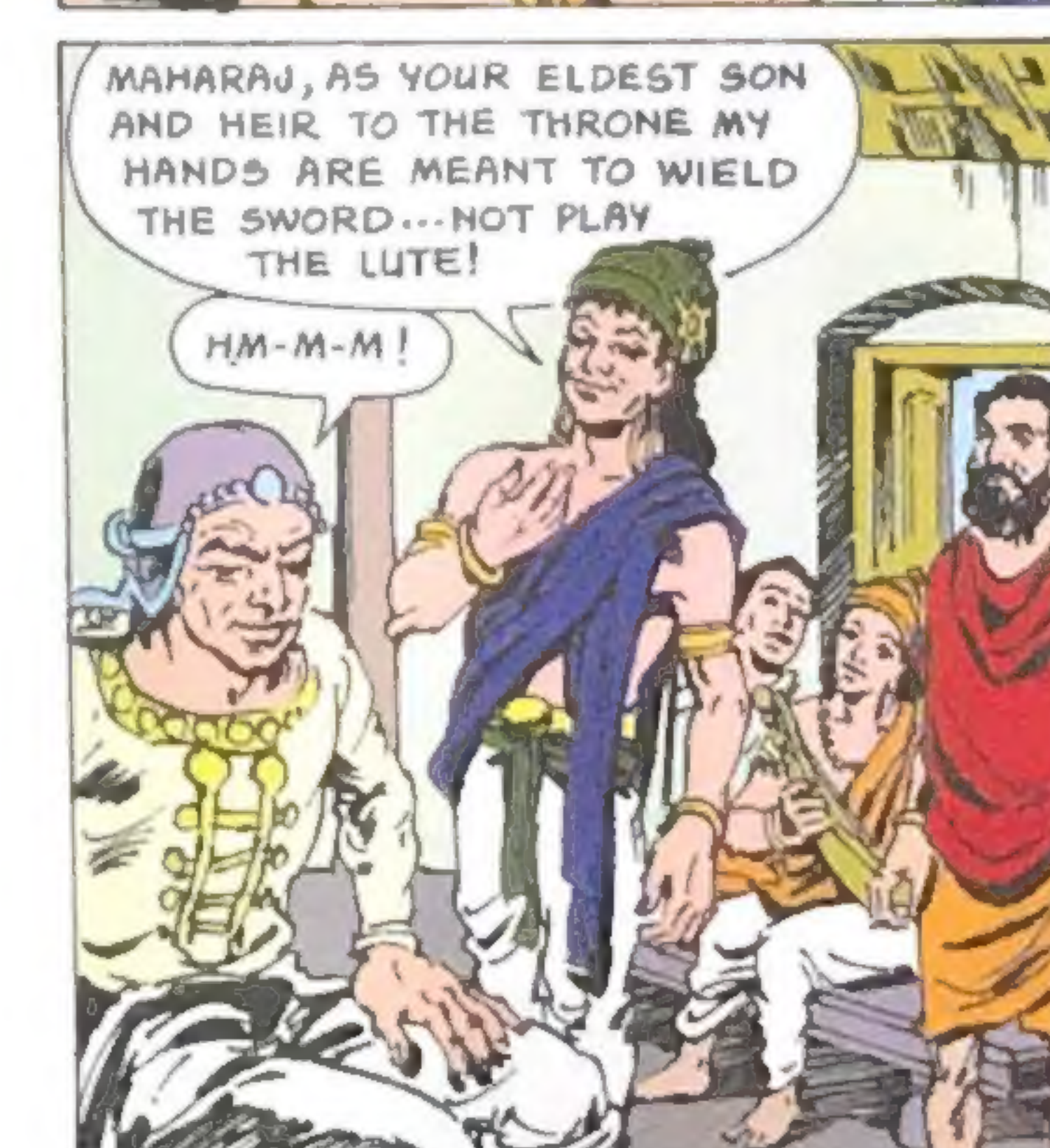
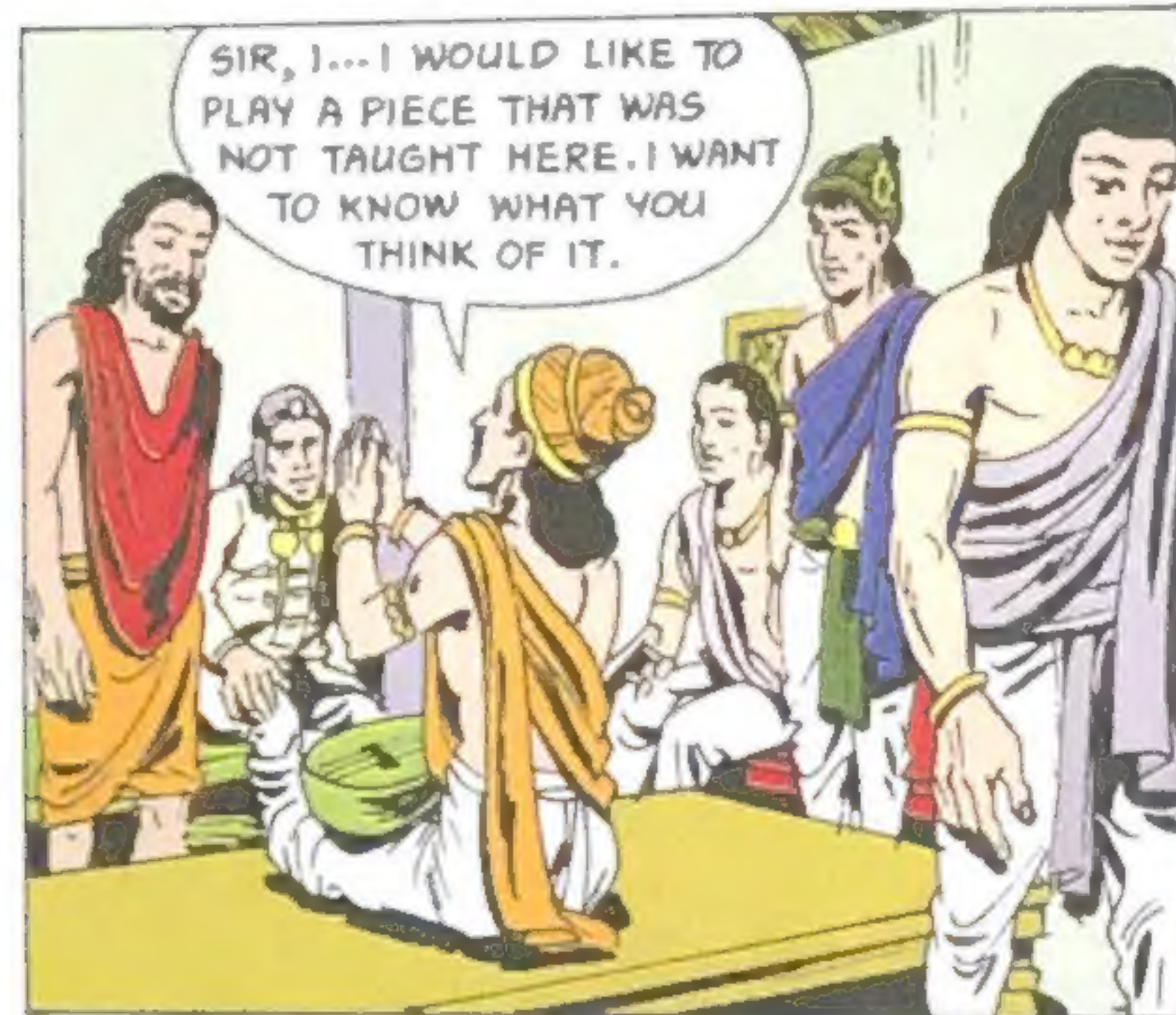
...AND EMBRACED HIS OPPONENT.



LATER, AS THEY WALKED TOWARDS THE HALL WHERE MUSIC WAS TAUGHT —







CHANDRA GUPTA THEN LEFT FOR HIS PALACE.

THEY, KUMARADEVI, THE LICHCHAVI PRINCESS WHO WAS HIS FAVOURITE QUEEN AND THE MOTHER OF SAMUDRA GUPTA, WELCOMED HIM WITH A SMILE.



HAVE YOU FOUND THE ANSWER TO YOUR QUESTION?

YES. I THINK I HAVE.



BUT WHY DID YOU WANT TO KNOW WHICH OF YOUR SONS WAS THE BEST?

BECAUSE HE...



... IS GOING TO BE MY SUCCESSOR!

I... I DON'T UNDERSTAND.



ACCORDING TO TRADITION, YOUR ELDEST SON IS YOUR SUCCESSOR.

YE-ES. BUT...



...TRADITION WILL HAVE TO BE WAIVED IN THIS CASE.

OH!



MY SUCCESSOR HAS GREAT TASKS AHEAD OF HIM... A GREAT FUTURE.



KUMARADEVI, OUR MARRIAGE BROUGHT STRENGTH AND PEACE TO THE KINGDOM.



ANY OF MY SONS CAN WIN WARS AND EXPAND THE KINGDOM.



BUT ONLY ONE WHO HAS MASTERED THE ARTS OF PEACE AS WELL CAN BRING LIFE AND GLORY TO IT.

WHEN IT WAS TIME FOR HIS SONS TO GET MARRIED, CHANDRA GUPTA RESERVED THE MOST ACCOMPLISHED BRIDE FOR SAMUDRA GUPTA.

SHOULDN'T THE BEST ALLIANCE GO TO YOUR ELDEST SON?

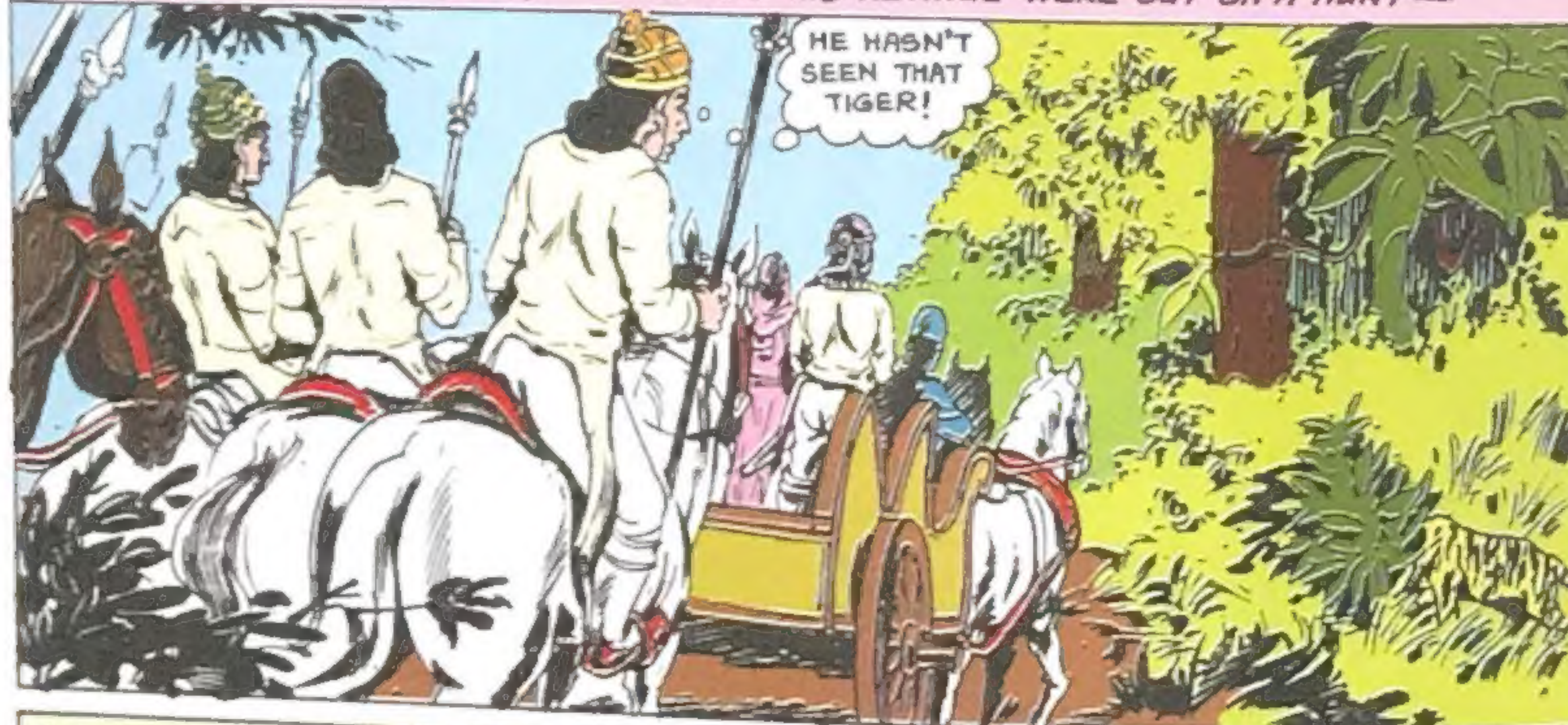
NO. SAMUDRA GUPTA WILL MARRY DATTADEVI AND FOR VERY GOOD REASONS.



AND SO SAMUDRA GUPTA WAS MARRIED TO DATTADEVI.



ONE DAY WHILE CHANDRA GUPTA, HIS SONS AND HIS RETINUE WERE OUT ON A HUNT —



HE HADN'T SEEN THAT TIGER!

AS THE TIGER SPRANG...



... A SPEAR BROUGHT IT ROARING TO THE GROUND.



SOMEONE IN OUR PARTY HAS BEEN VERY ALERT!

CHANDRA GUPTA PRETENDED TO BE ANGRY.



WHO SENT THAT SPEAR AND DENIED ME THE PRIVILEGE OF DEFENDING MYSELF?
IT WAS SAMUDRA GUPTA, FATHER.



I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN!
YOU HAVE BEEN PRESUMPTUOUS.



IGNORING KACHA'S COMMENT, SAMUDRA GUPTA ADDRESSED HIS FATHER.

I... I DID NOT MEAN TO BE AUDACIOUS, FATHER. I WAS PROTECTING THE LIFE OF MY KING.



YOU HAD NOT SEEN THE BEAST. IT COULD HAVE KILLED YOU.



THAT WAS A NARROW ESCAPE. I MUST DO WHAT I HAVE DECIDED TO DO, WITHOUT DELAY.

THE NEXT DAY, THE COURT AWAITED CHANDRA GUPTA'S ARRIVAL IN HUSHED EXPECTANCY.



WHY HAS HE CALLED THIS SPECIAL COURT?

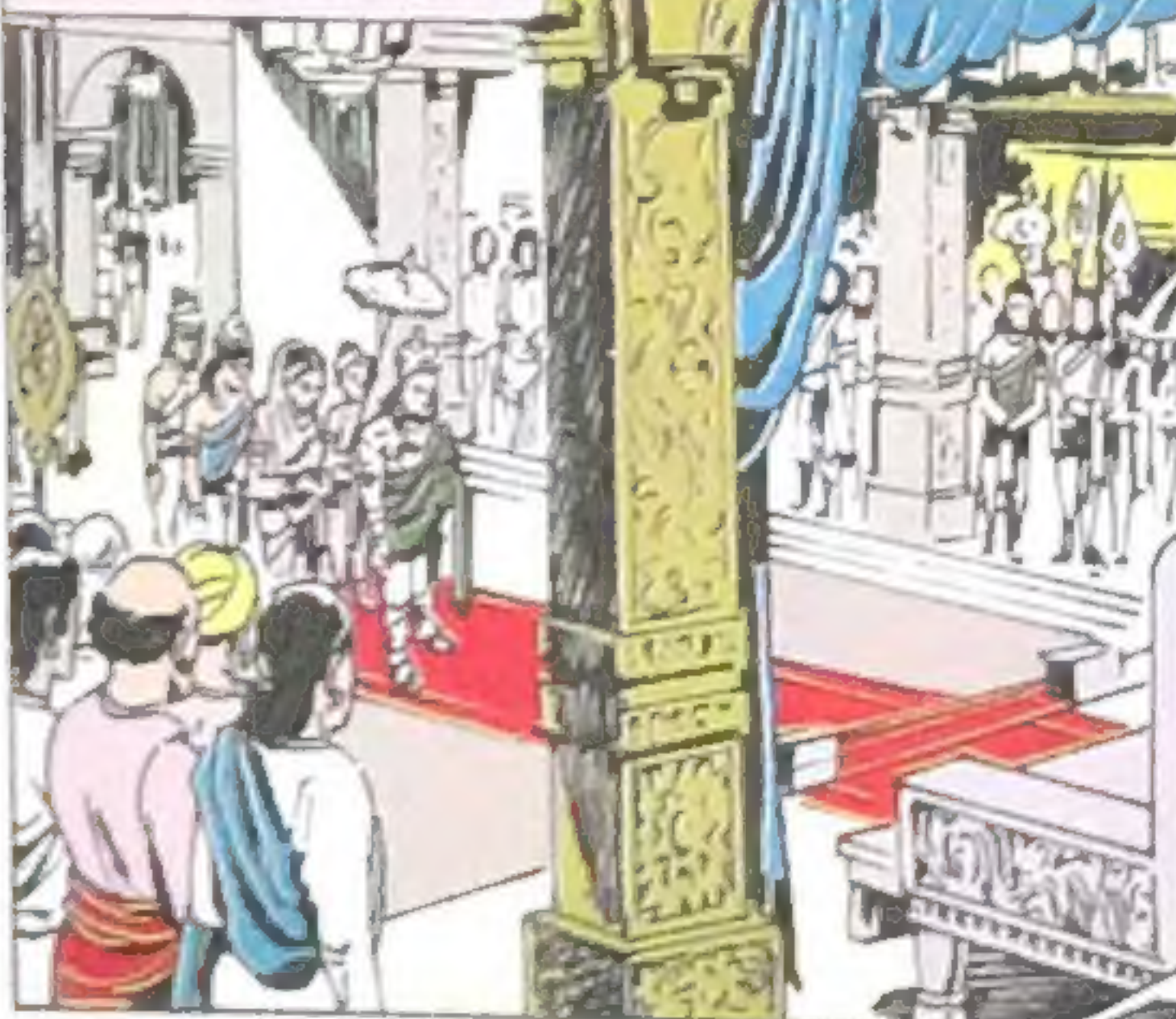
IT MUST BE TO DISCUSS THE PLANS OF SOME CAMPAIGN.

OUR KING HAS NEVER FAVOURED A POLICY OF AGGRESSION AND EXPANSION.

THEN WHAT COULD IT BE?



THE ARRIVAL OF THE KING, HIS FAVOURITE QUEEN AND THE PRINCES PUT AN END TO THE SPECULATION.



WHEN ALL WERE SEATED —

WHAT YOU ARE ABOUT TO WITNESS TODAY MAY AMAZE SOME... DISAPPOINT A FEW... AND PLEASE MANY.



BUT WHAT I PROPOSE TO DO IS BEING DONE AFTER CAREFUL DELIBERATION AND FOR THE WELFARE OF MY SUBJECTS AND THE KINGDOM.

HE IS GOING TO PROCLAIM ME AS HIS SUCCESSOR.



I HAVE DECIDED TO WAIVE TRADITION...



... AND CROWN MY SON...

HE'S GOING TO ABDICATE IN MY FAVOUR!



... SAMUDRA GUPTA AS YOUR KING IN MY LIFETIME.



THEN HE WALKED UP TO SAMUDRA GUPTA AND EMBRACED HIM.

MY SON, MAY YOU RULE THE WHOLE WORLD!



ONLY KUMARADEVI NOTICED THE EFFECT CHANDRA GUPTA'S PROCLAMATION HAD ON KACHA.



LET ARRANGEMENTS BE MADE FOR THE CORONATION.



AND CHANDRA GUPTA MADE HIS EXIT,

The Glory of the Guptas

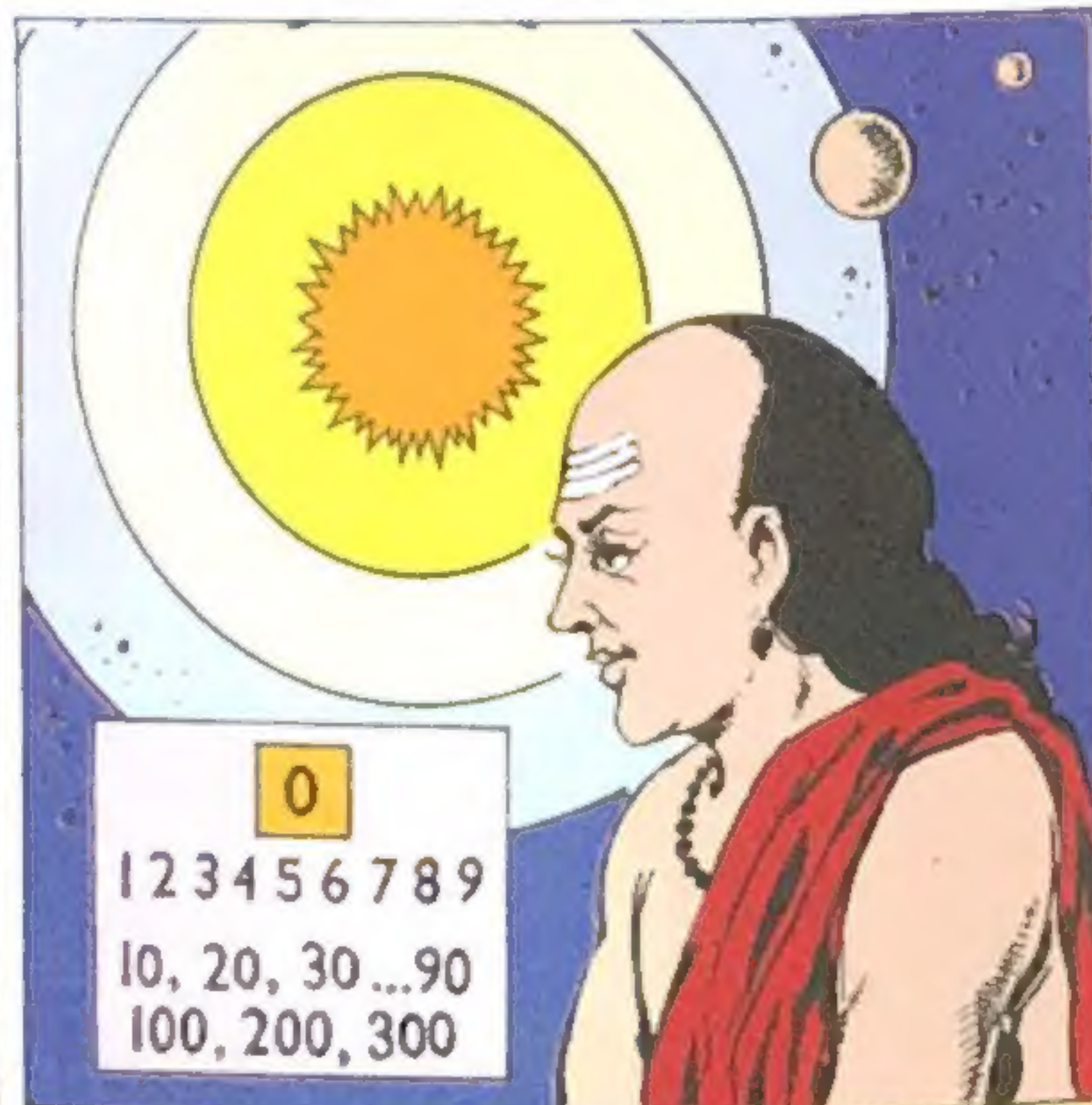
Script: Swarn Khandpur • Illustrations: Ramesh Umrotkar



THE RULE OF THE GUPTA DYNASTY (A.D. 320 TO 569) IS USUALLY KNOWN AS THE GOLDEN AGE OF INDIAN HISTORY. IT WAS A PERIOD OF PEACE AND PROSPERITY AND IT WITNESSED THE BLOSSOMING OF LITERATURE, SCIENCE AND THE ARTS.

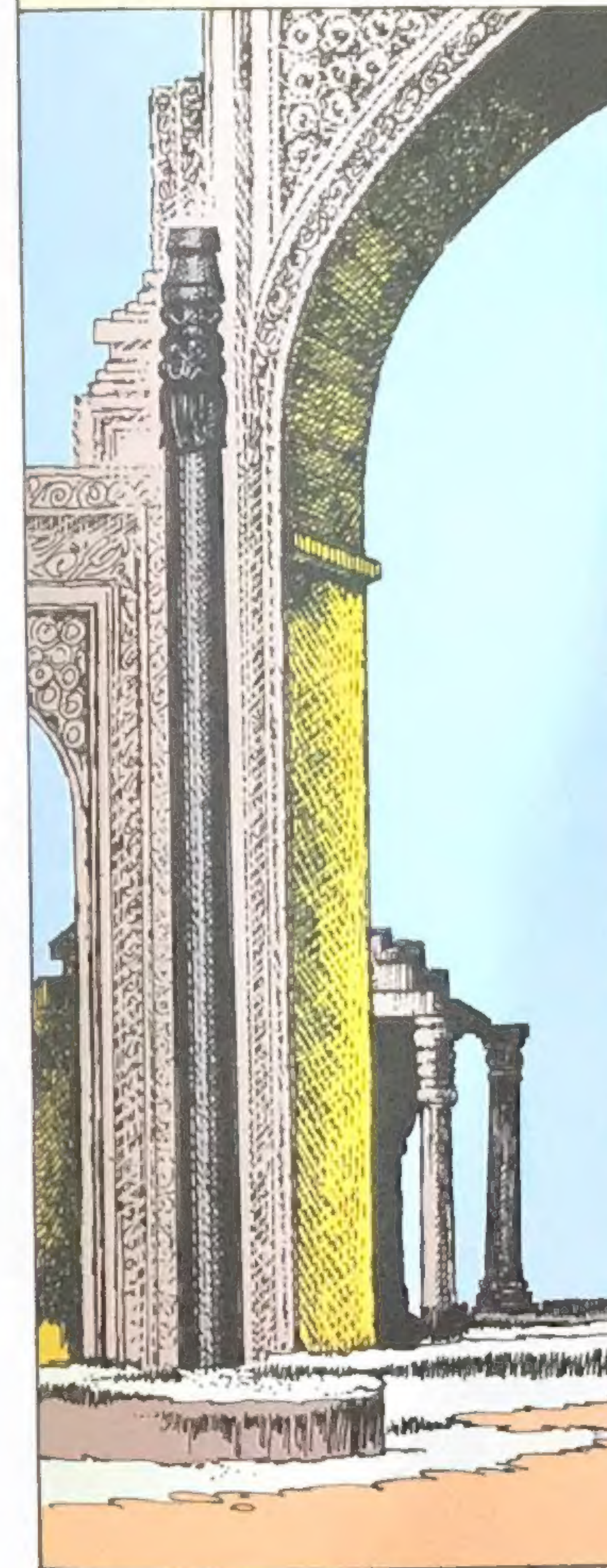


IT WAS UNDER THE PATRONAGE OF THE GUPTA KINGS THAT SOME OF THE FINEST WORKS OF SANSKRIT POETRY AND DRAMA WERE WRITTEN. THE MOST FAMOUS POET AND DRAMATIST OF INDIA, KALIDASA, PROBABLY FLOURISHED DURING THIS TIME. HIS 'ABHIJNANA SHAKUNTALAM' IS WORLD-FAMOUS.

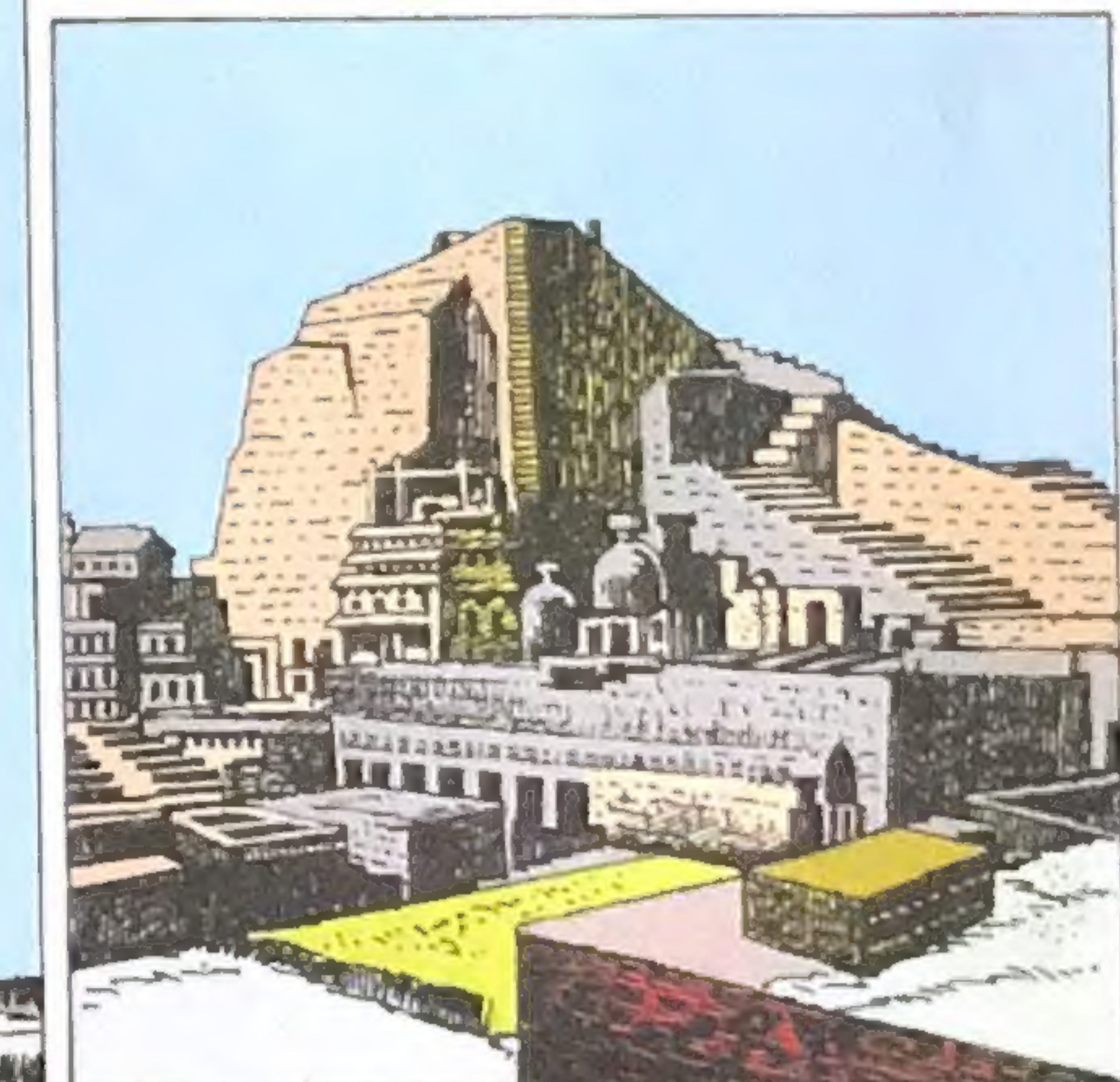
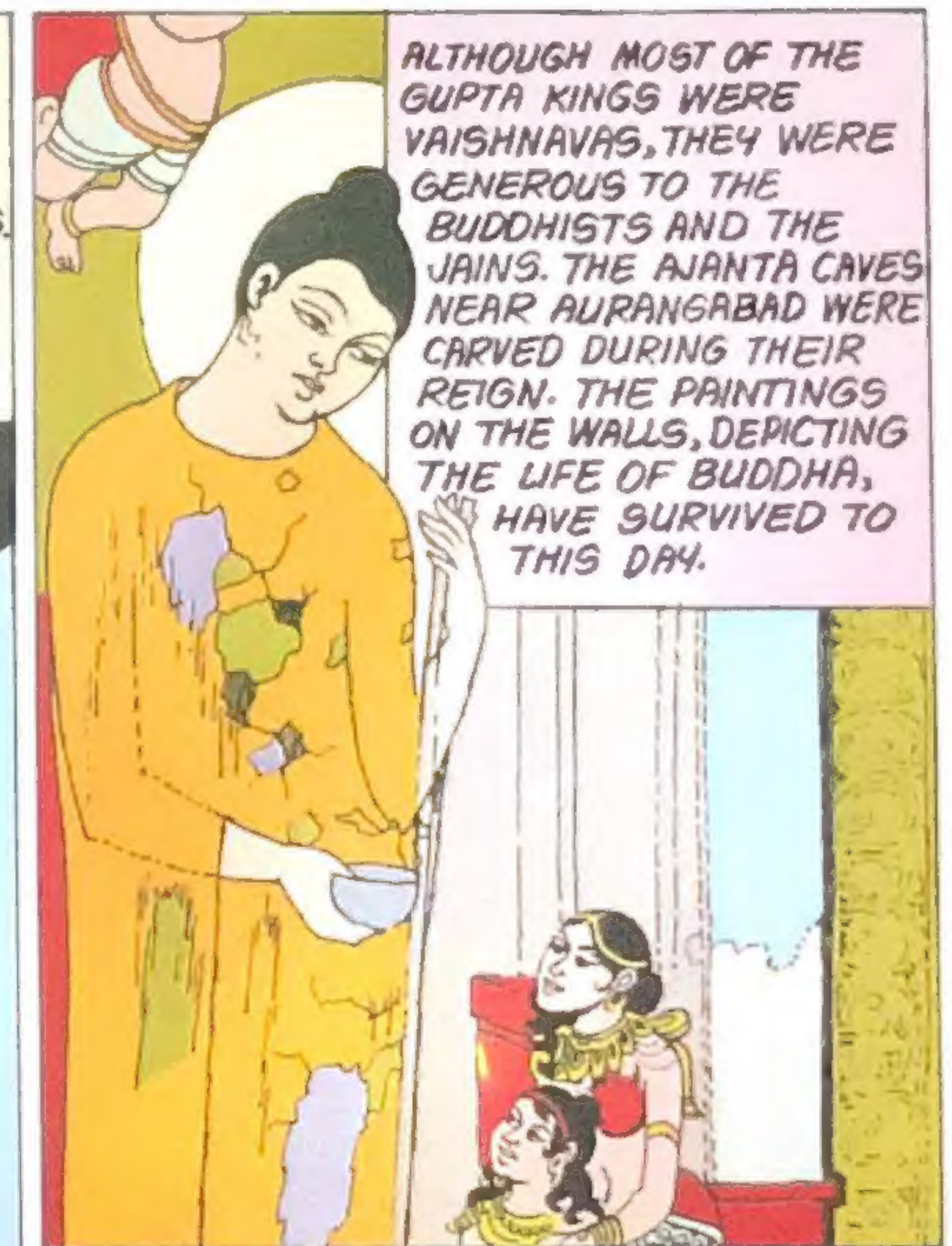


ARYABHATA, THE GREAT ASTRONOMER AND MATHEMATICIAN, WHO GAVE THE WORLD THE CONCEPT OF ZERO AND WHO WAS THE FIRST TO DISCOVER THAT THE EARTH REVOLVES ROUND THE SUN AND ROTATES ON ITS AXIS, TOO BELONGED TO THIS PERIOD.

THE IRON PILLAR AT DELHI, WHICH WEIGHS ABOUT 6 TONNES AND IS 7.32 METRES IN HEIGHT, IS A LIVING TRIBUTE TO THE GUPTA METALLURGISTS. DESPITE 2000 YEARS OF EXPOSURE TO WIND AND RAIN, IT DOES NOT HAVE EVEN A TRACE OF RUST!



ALTHOUGH MOST OF THE GUPTA KINGS WERE VAISHNAVAS, THEY WERE GENEROUS TO THE BUDDHISTS AND THE JAINS. THE AJANTA CAVES NEAR AURANGABAD WERE CARVED DURING THEIR REIGN. THE PAINTINGS ON THE WALLS, DEPICTING THE LIFE OF BUDDHA, HAVE SURVIVED TO THIS DAY.



THERE WERE SEVERAL BUDDHIST MONASTERIES WHICH WERE AIDED BY ROYAL GRANTS. THE NALANDA MONASTERY, WHICH LATER BECAME A WORLD-FAMOUS UNIVERSITY, WAS FOUNDED DURING THE GUPTA PERIOD.

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SAMUDRA GUPTA

LATER, WHEN THE COURTIER'S WERE ALONE —

OUR KING TAKING A WIFE FROM THE LICHCHAVI OLIGARCHY IS ONE THING.



BUT MAKING A SON OF THAT UNION THE RULER IS QUITE ANOTHER. IT WAS AN UNWISE CHOICE.

ON THE CONTRARY, WITH HIM AS KING, WE CAN BE SURE OF THE CONTINUED POLITICAL AND MILITARY SUPPORT OF THE LICHCHAVIS.



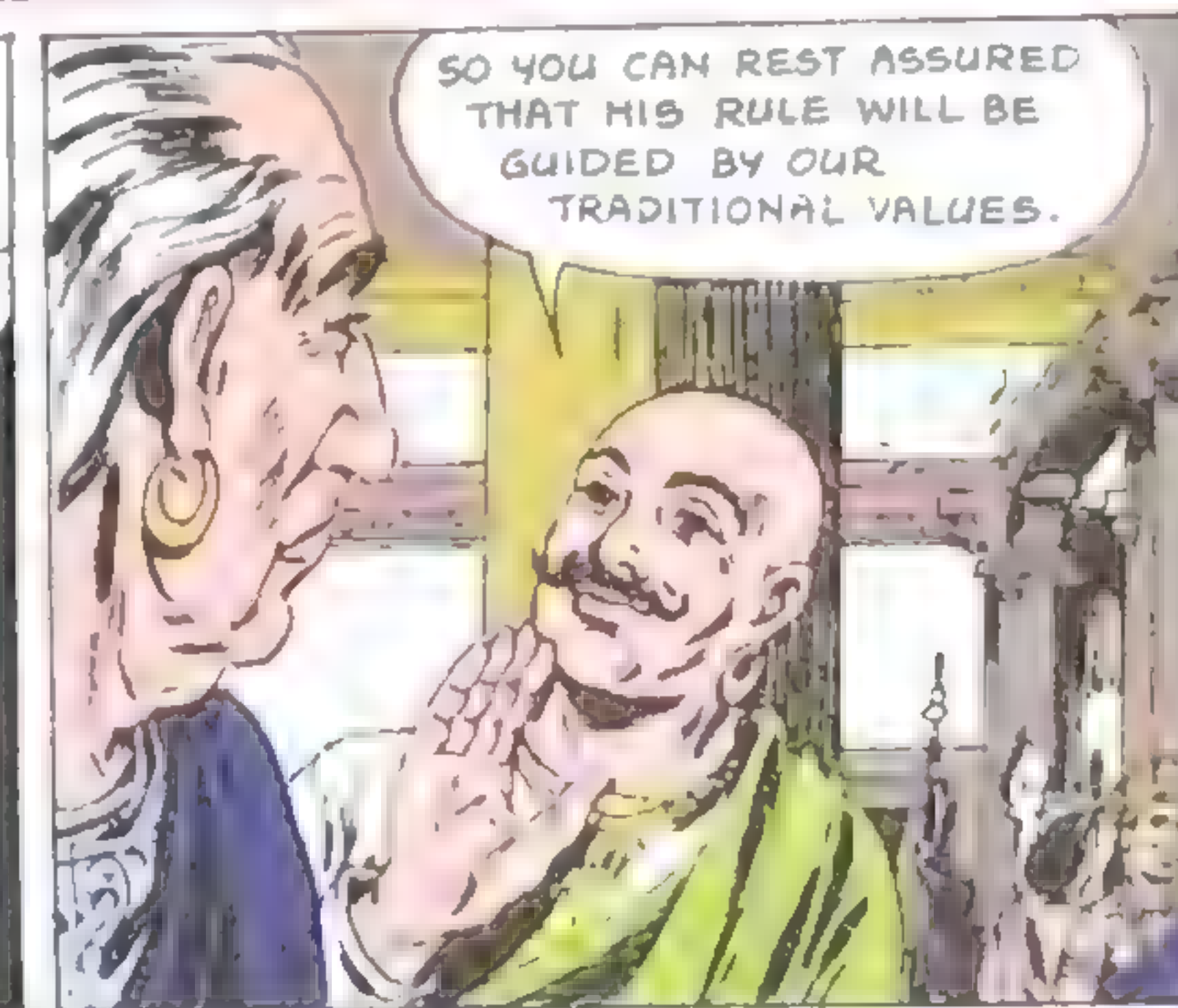
THE COURTIER WHO SUPPORTED THE CHOICE WAS DHHRUVABHUTI, CHIEF OF THE MILITARY AND HARISHENA'S FATHER.

WHAT IF HE ADOPTS THEIR HERETICAL CREEDS AND ENDANGERS OUR OWN?

THE SON OF THE LICHCHAVI QUEEN SURPASSES ALL IN HIS GRASP OF THE ITIHASAS, THE DHARMA-SHASTRAS AND THE ARTHASHASTRA.

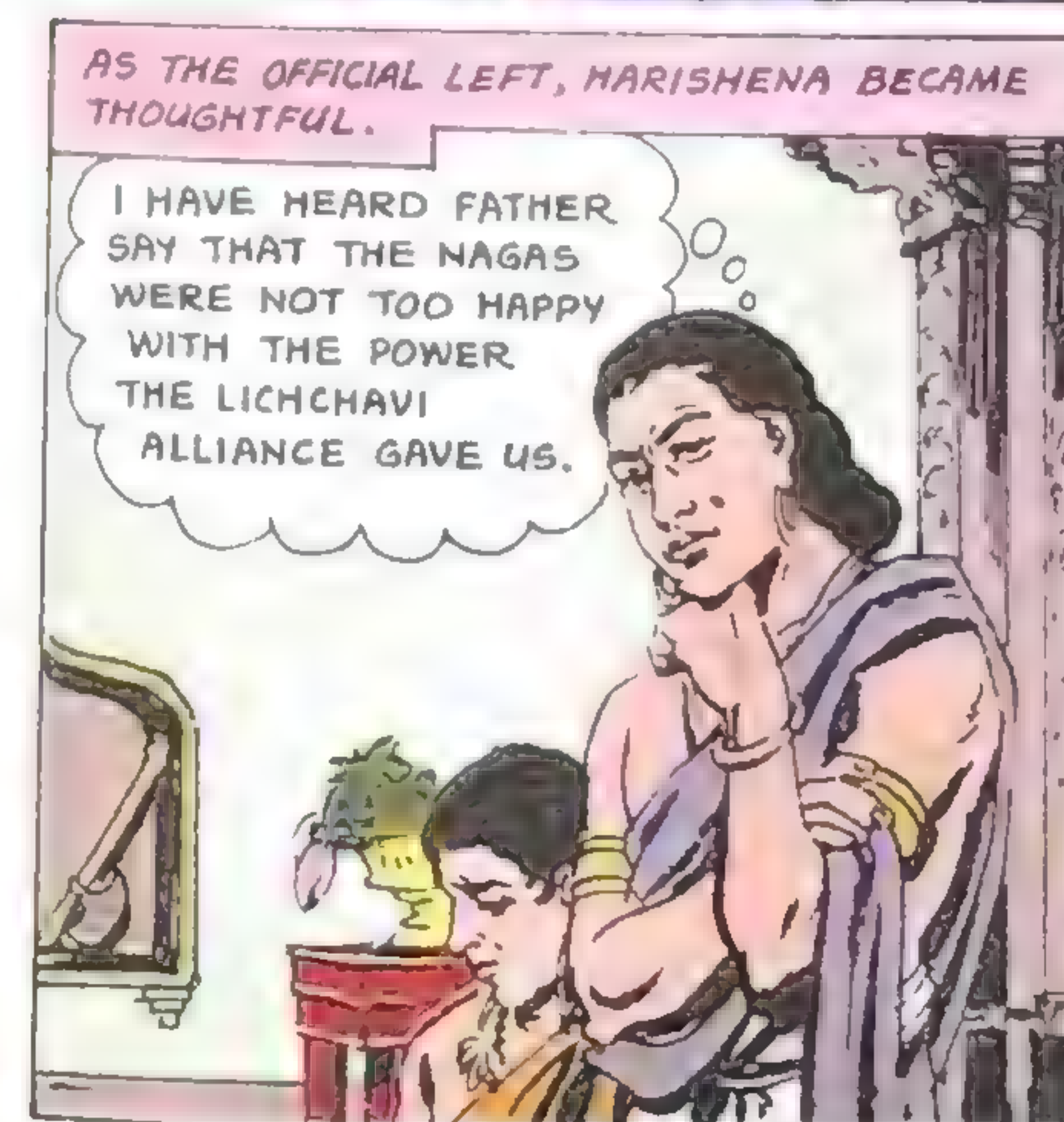
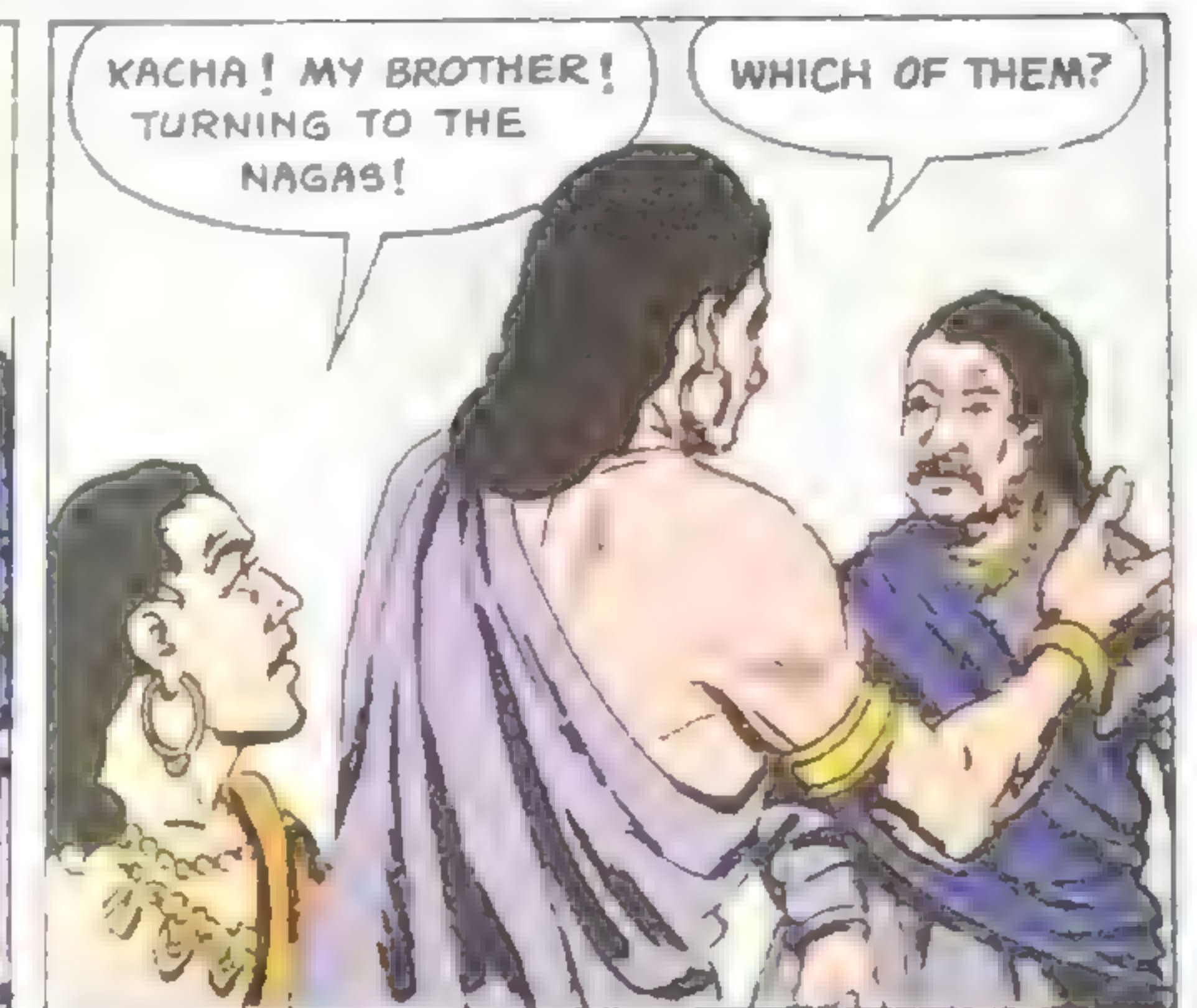
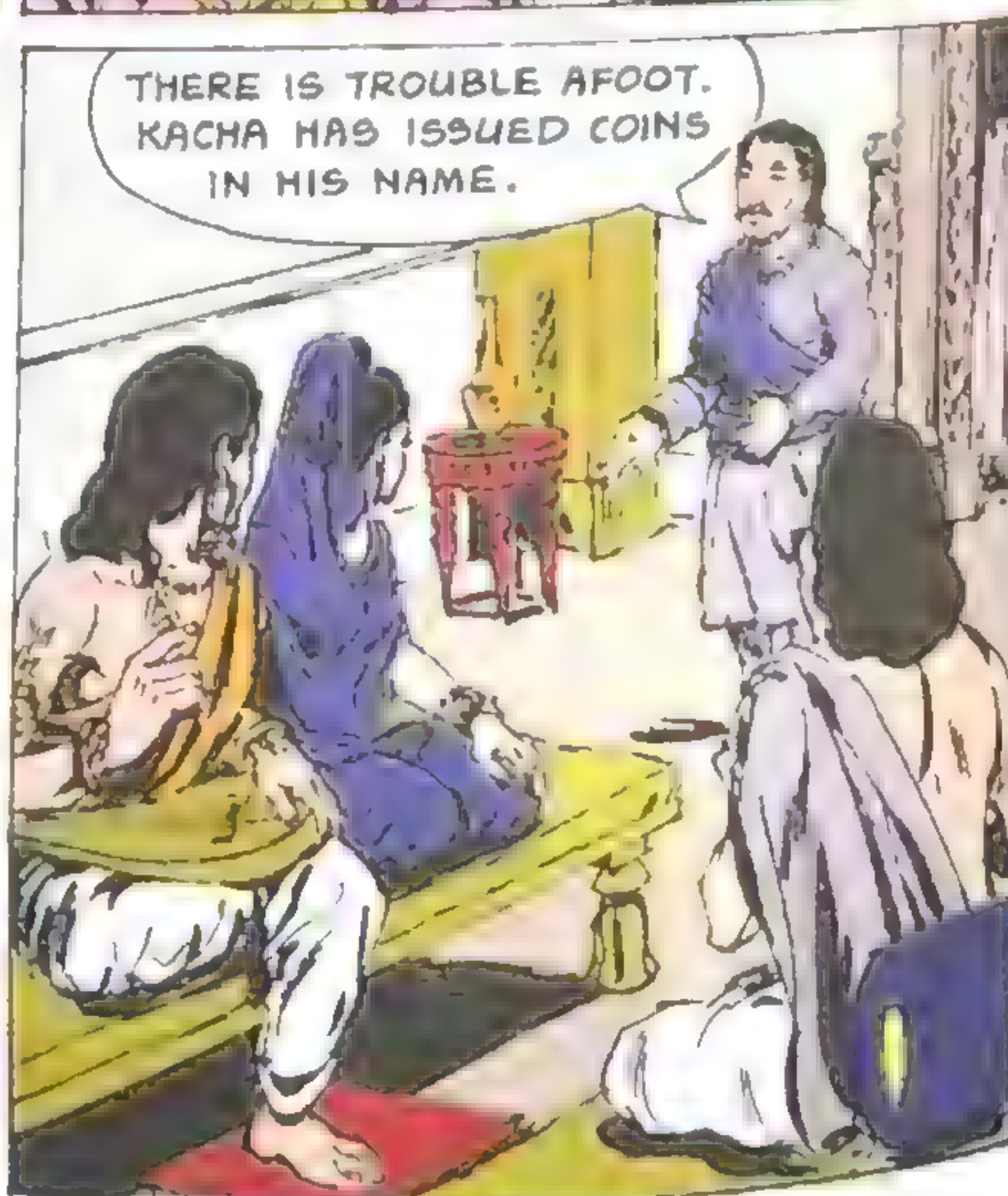
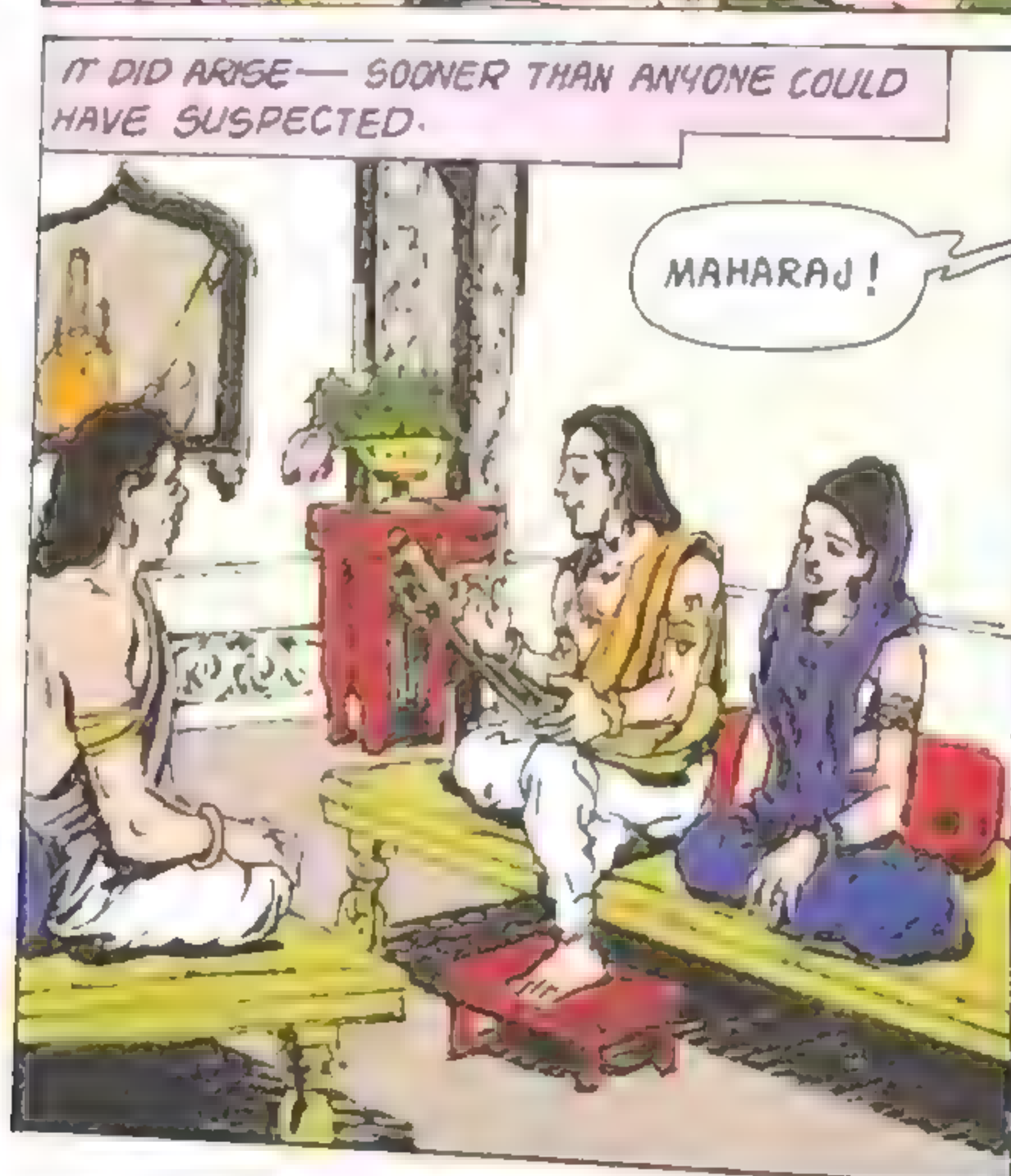
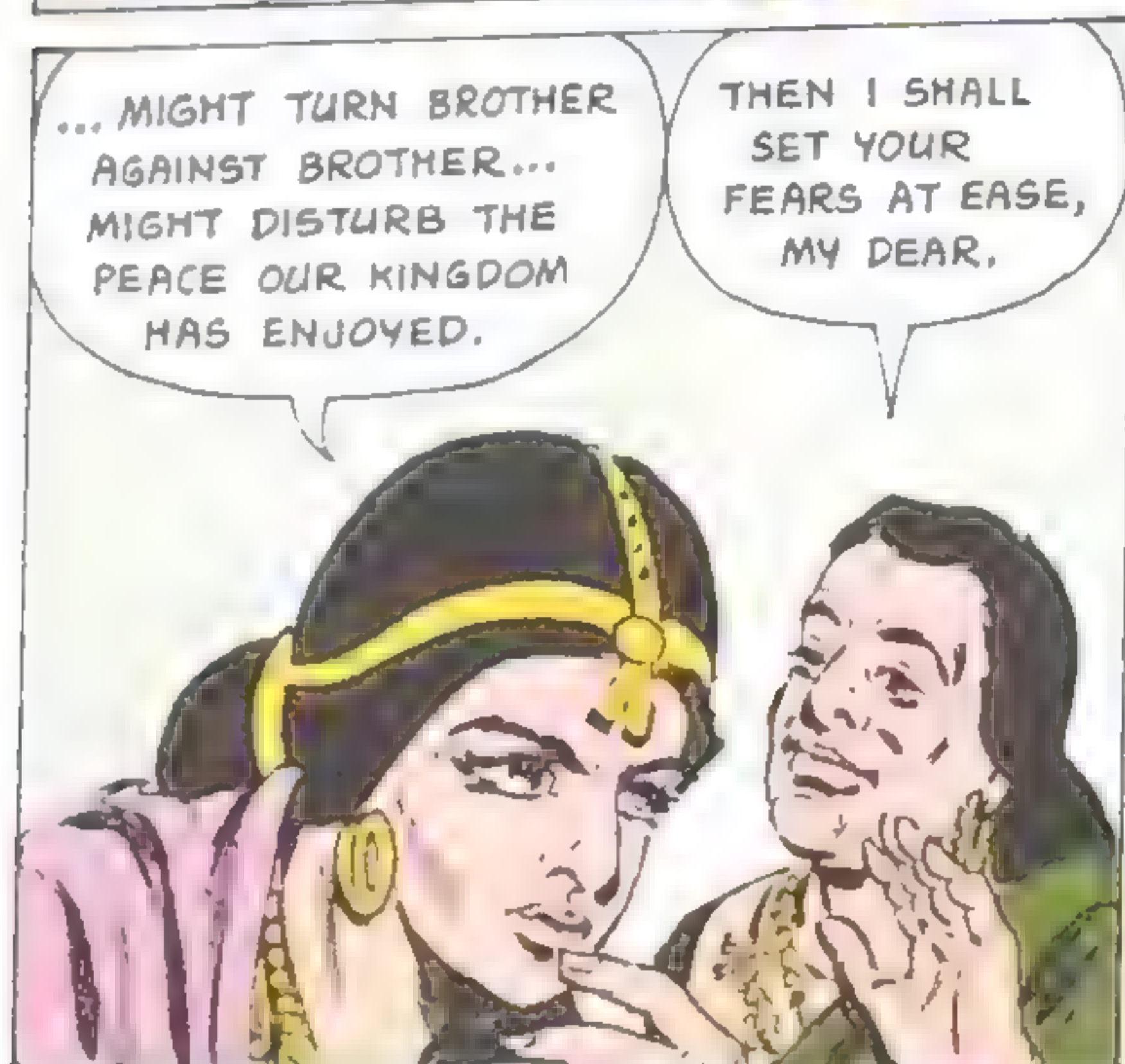


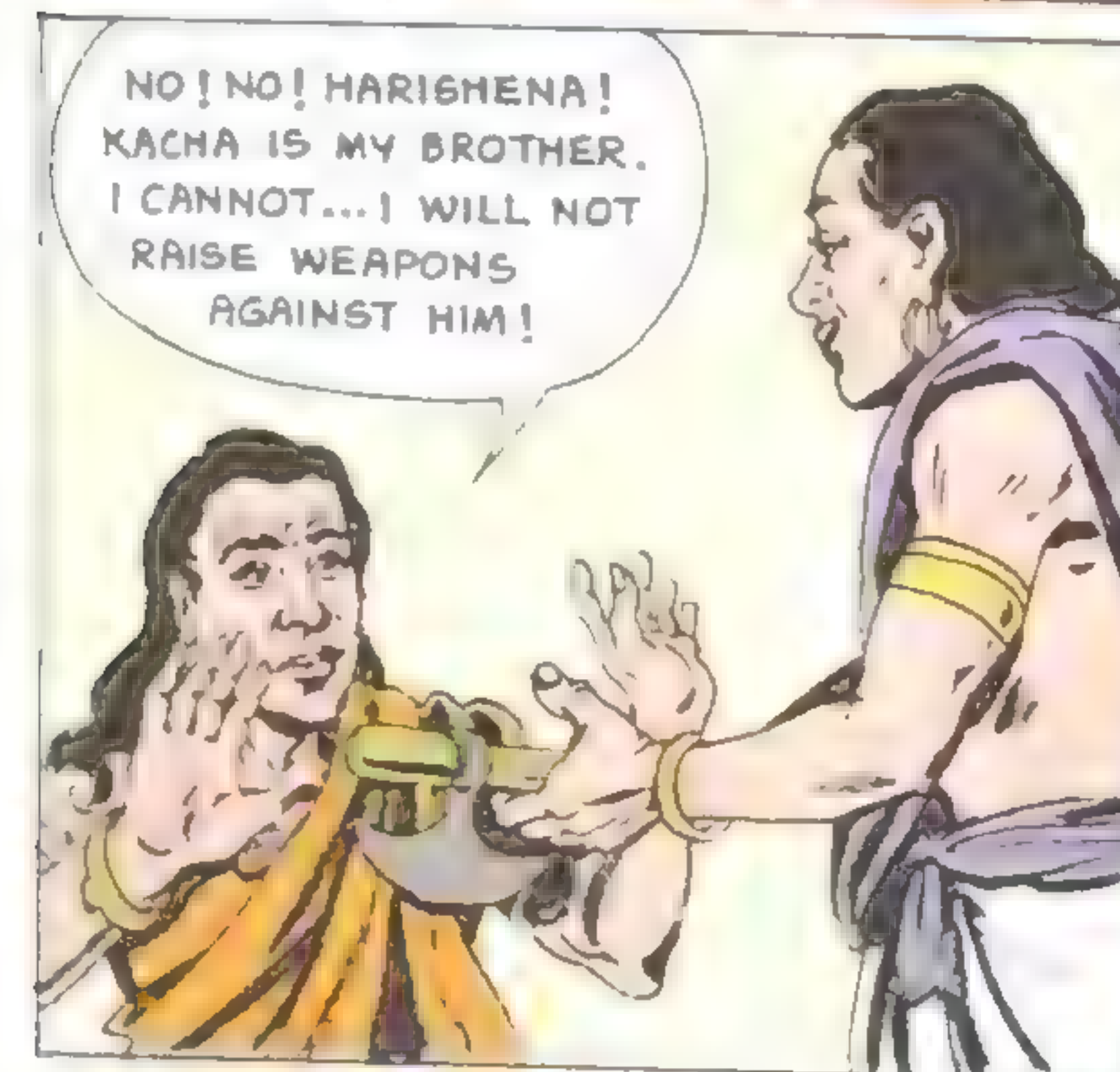
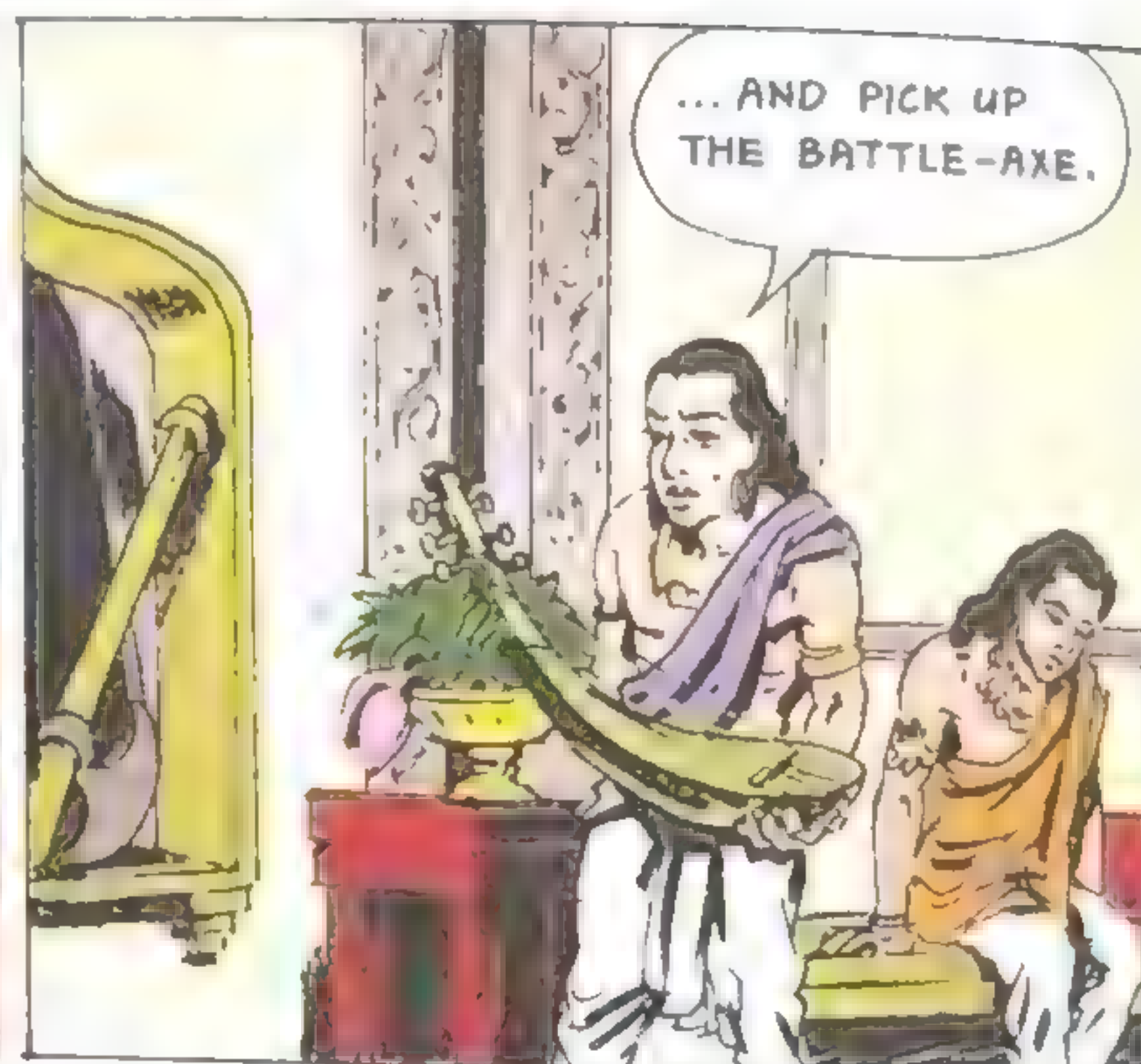
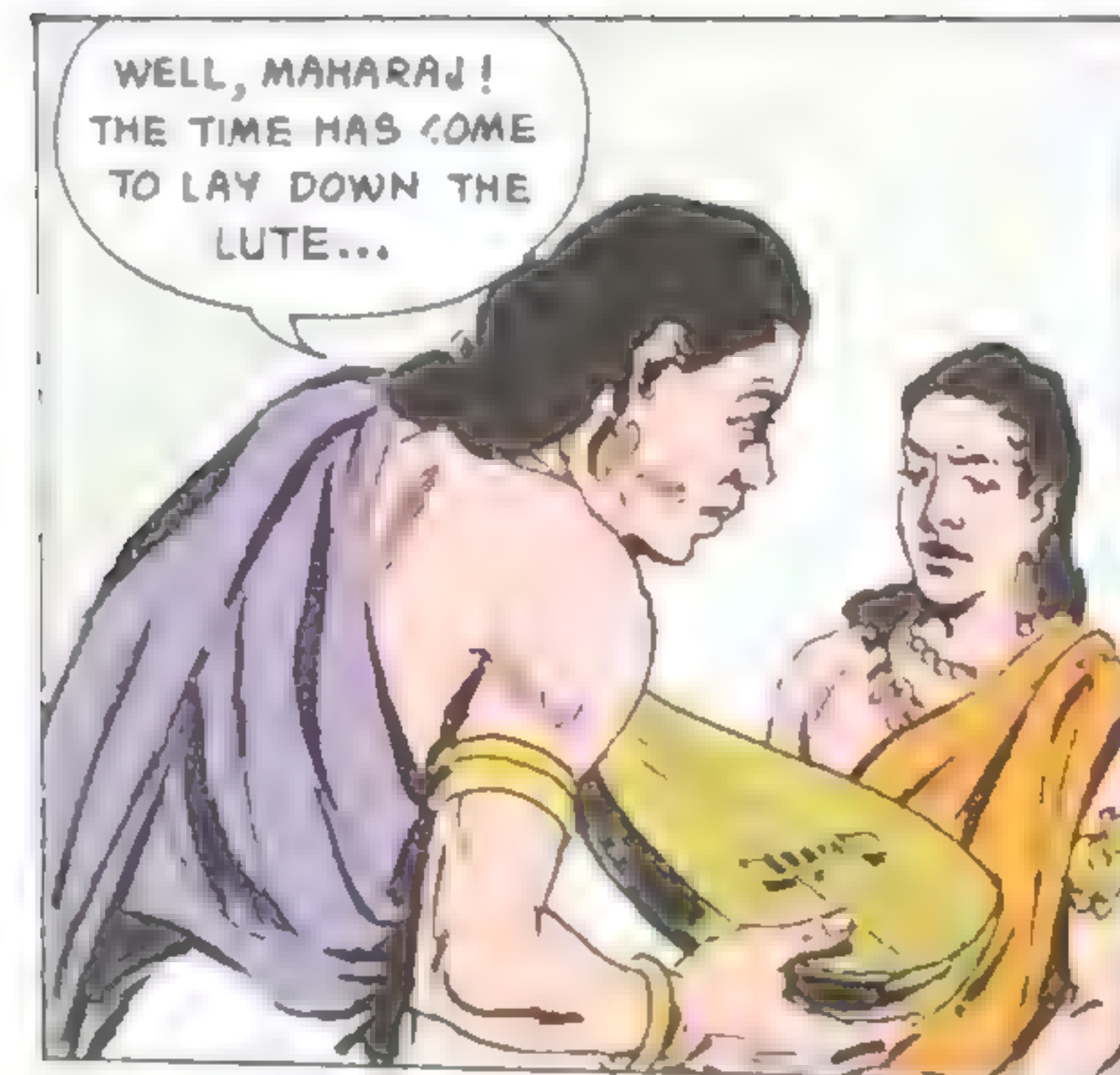
SO YOU CAN REST ASSURED THAT HIS RULE WILL BE GUIDED BY OUR TRADITIONAL VALUES.



THUS DID SAMUDRA GUPTA ASCEND THE THRONE EVEN IN THE LIFETIME OF HIS FATHER.



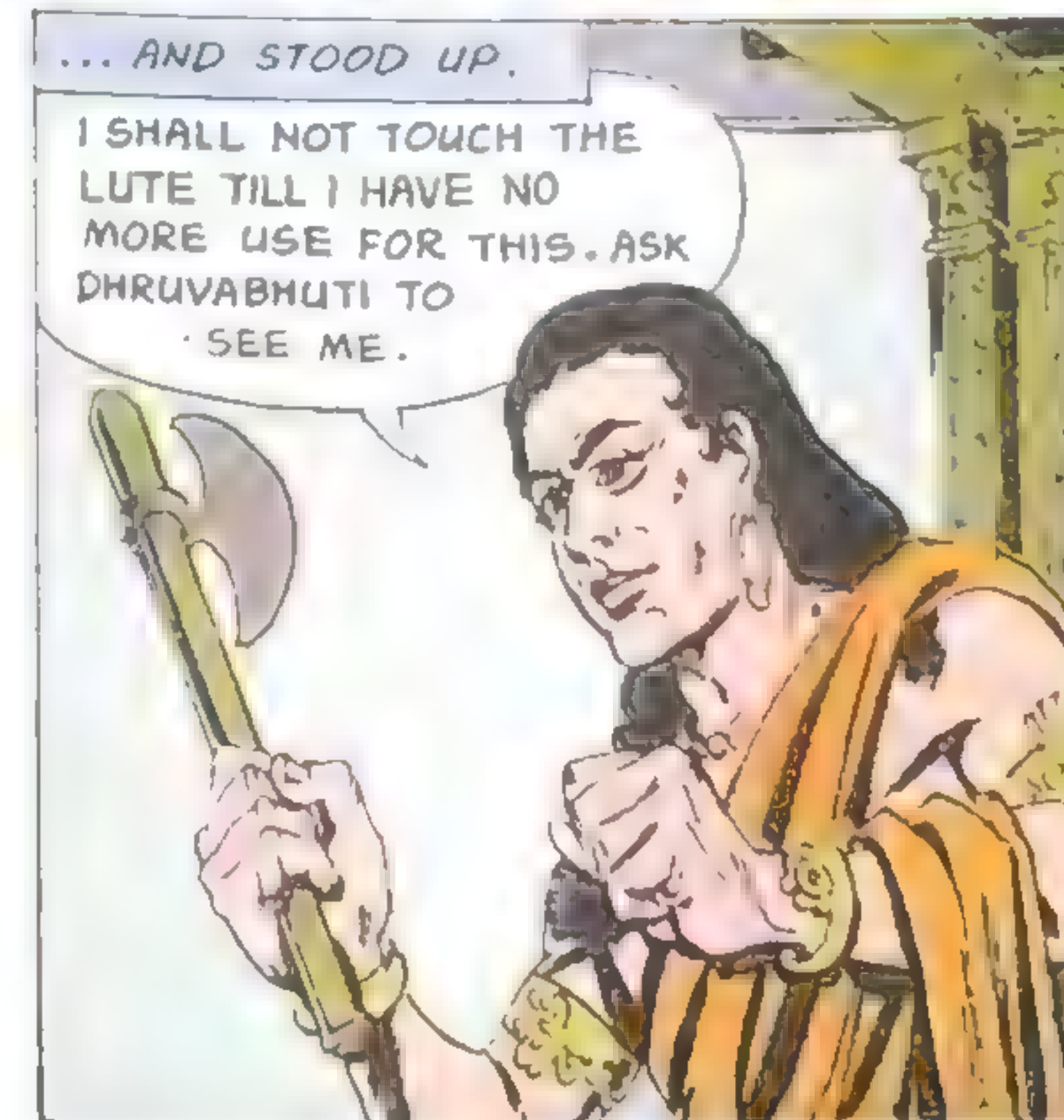
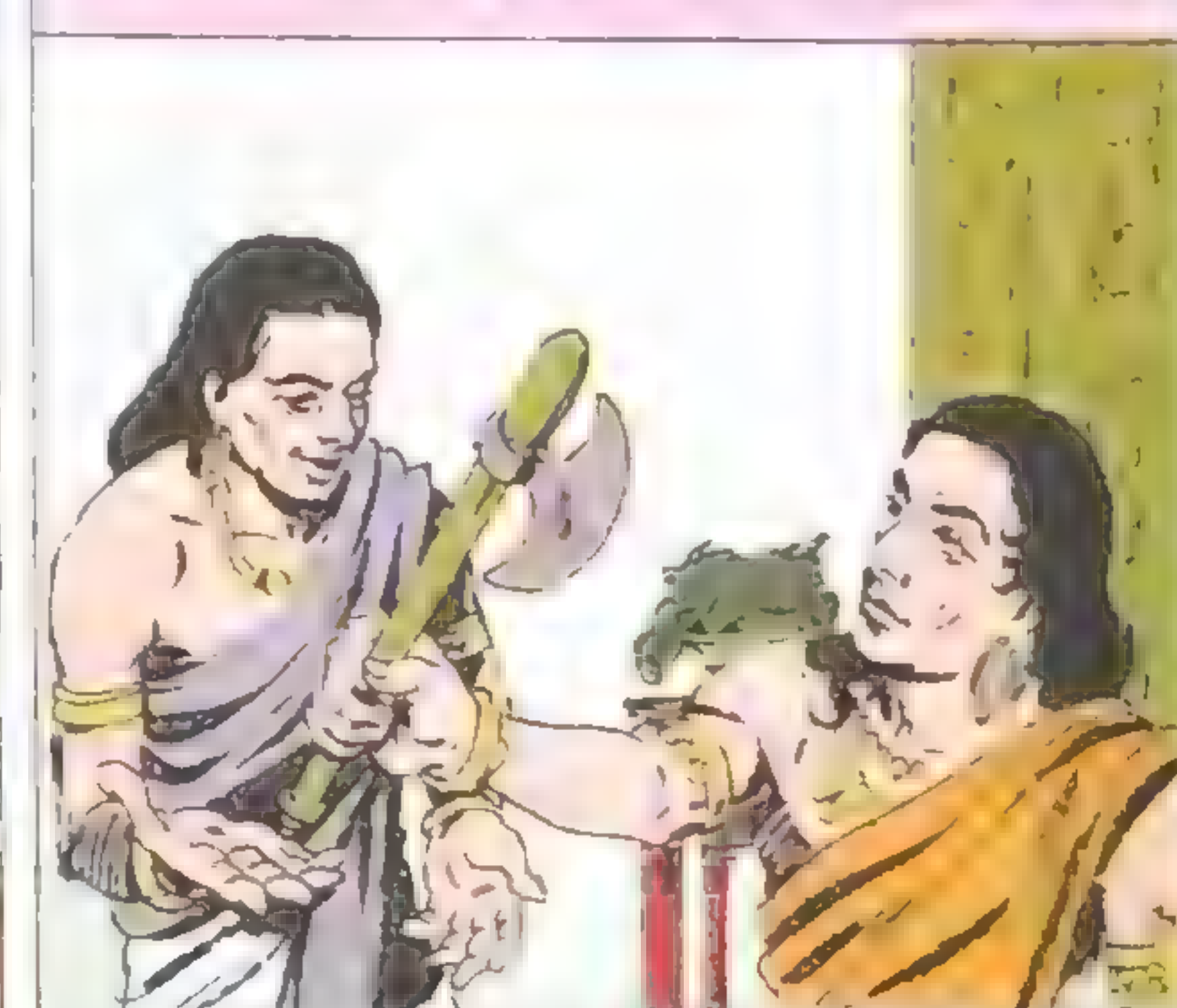




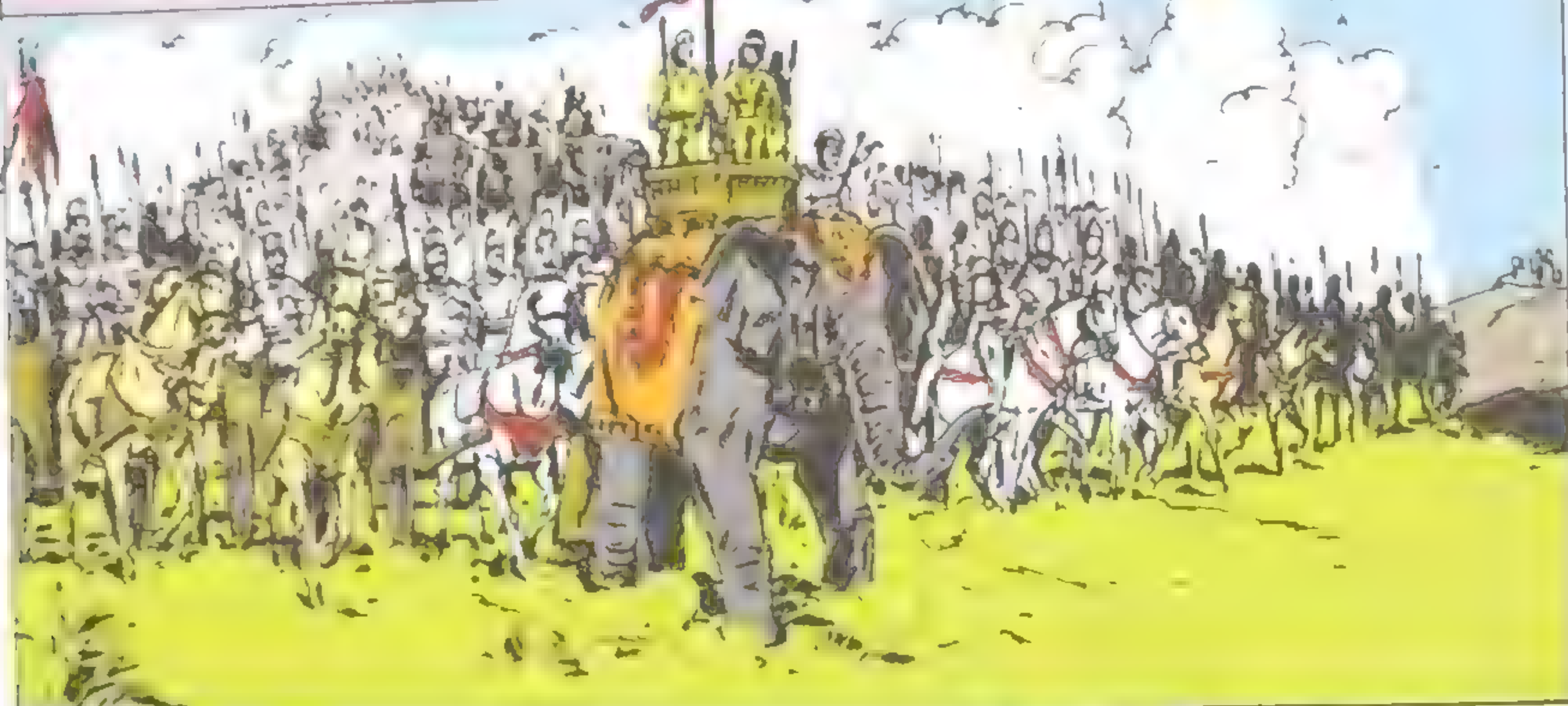
SAMUDRA GUPTA SLOWLY LOOKED UP AND
SMILED AT HARISHENA.



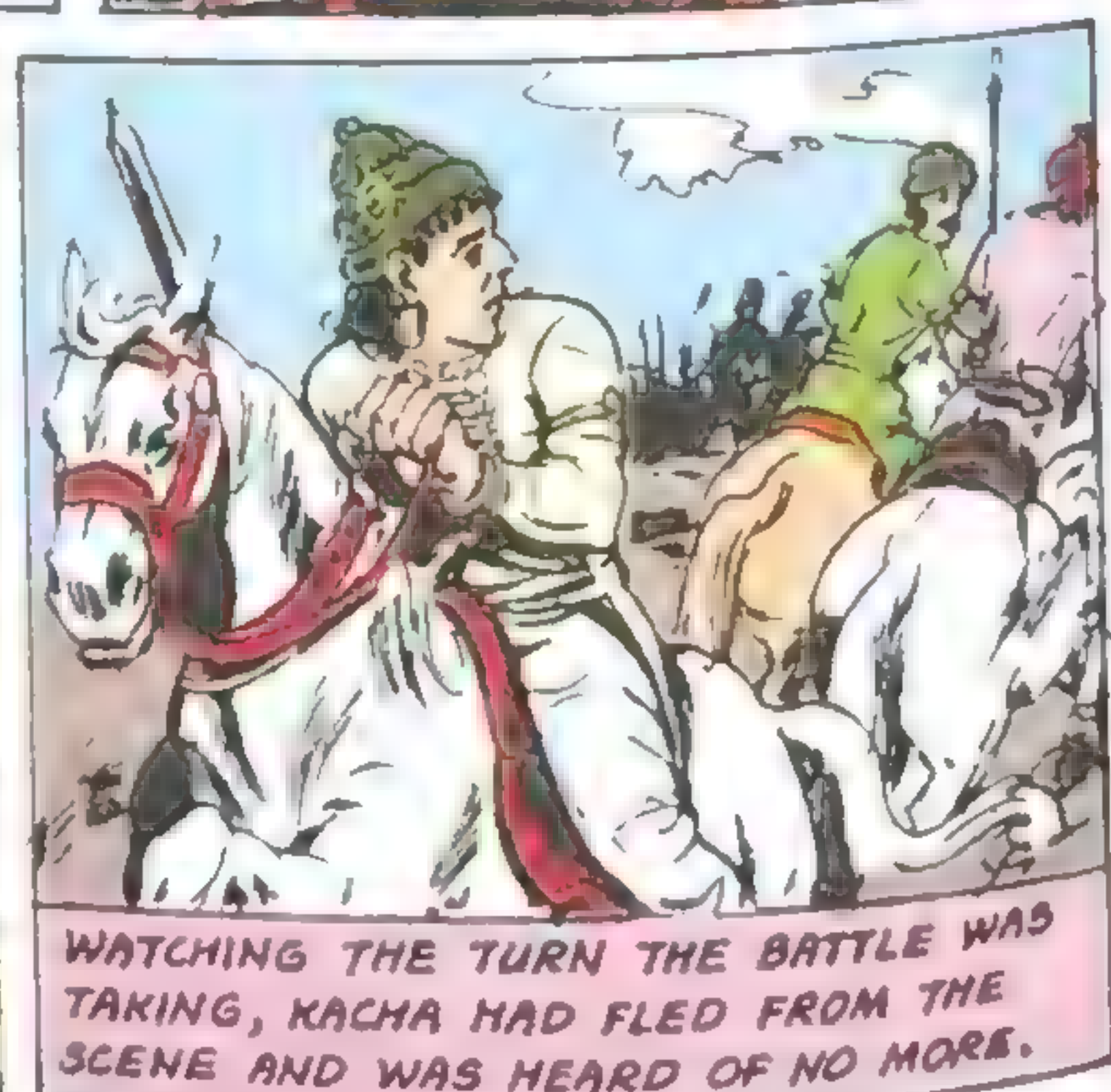
THEN HE TOOK THE BATTLE-AXE FROM HIM...



AND SO SAMUDRA GUPTA, AT THE HEAD OF A VAST ARMY, MARCHED OUT WITH HARISHENA, HIS FAVOURITE AT COURT.



IN THE BATTLE THAT FOLLOWED EVEN HIS ENEMIES COULD NOT HELP BUT ADMIRE HIS PROWESS IN WAR.

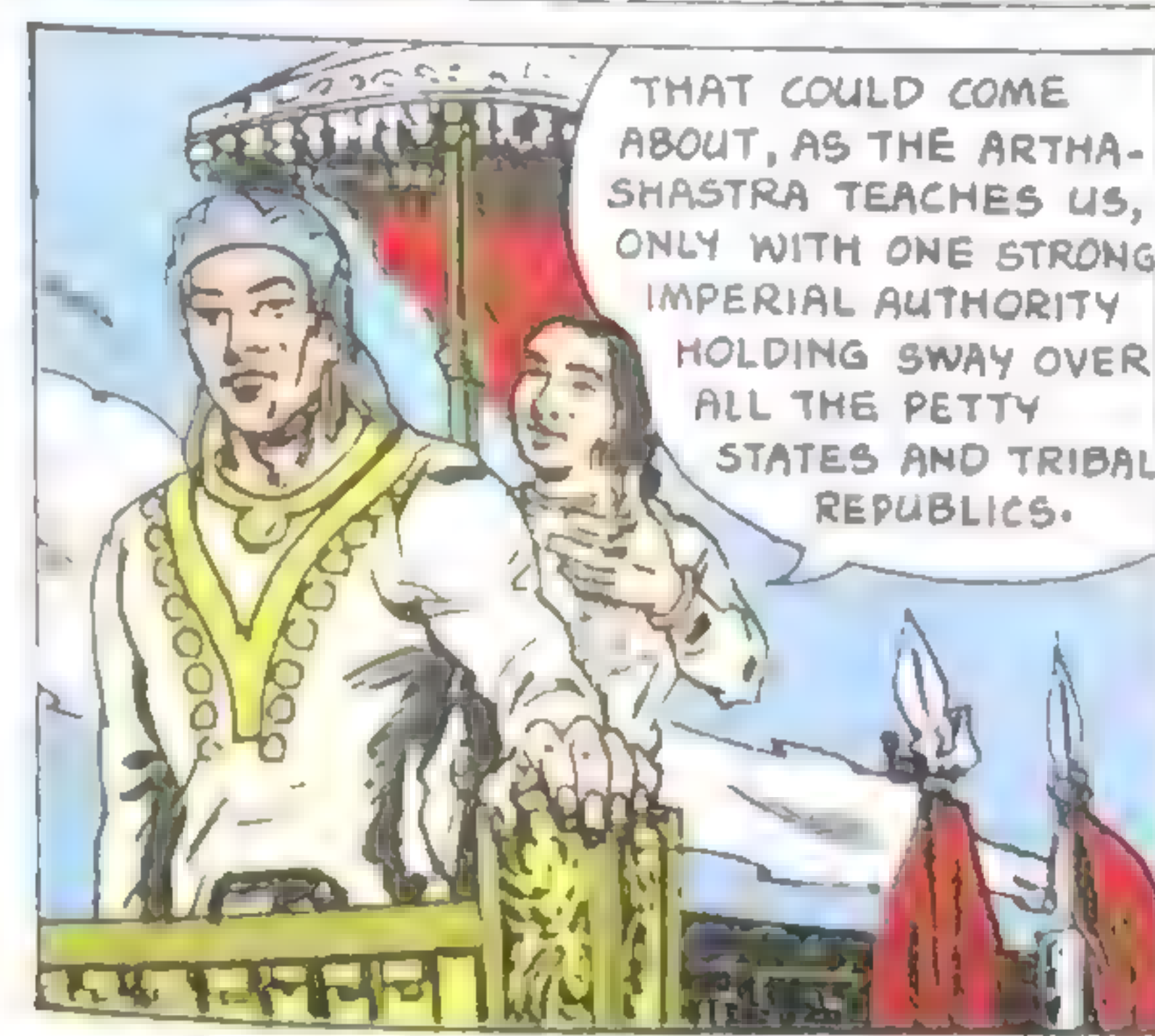
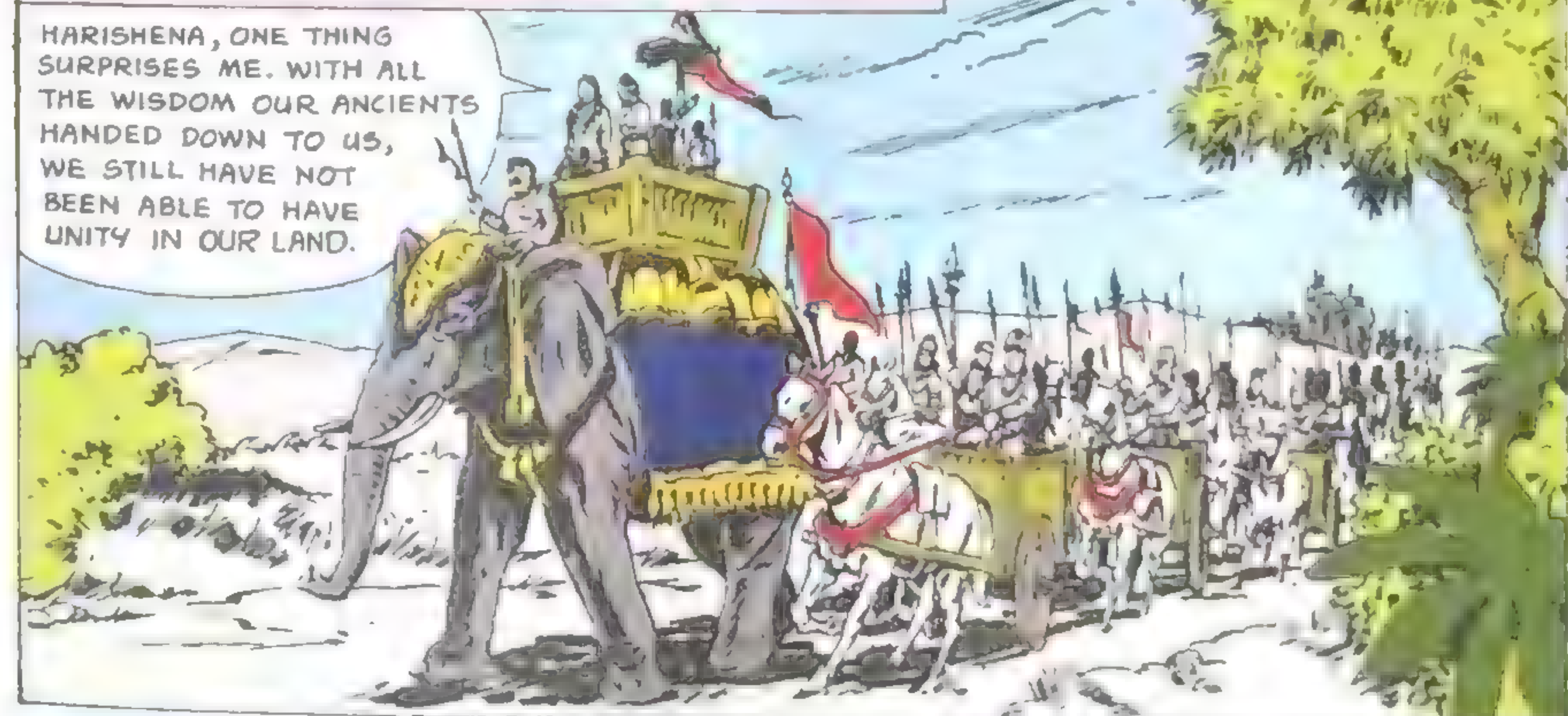


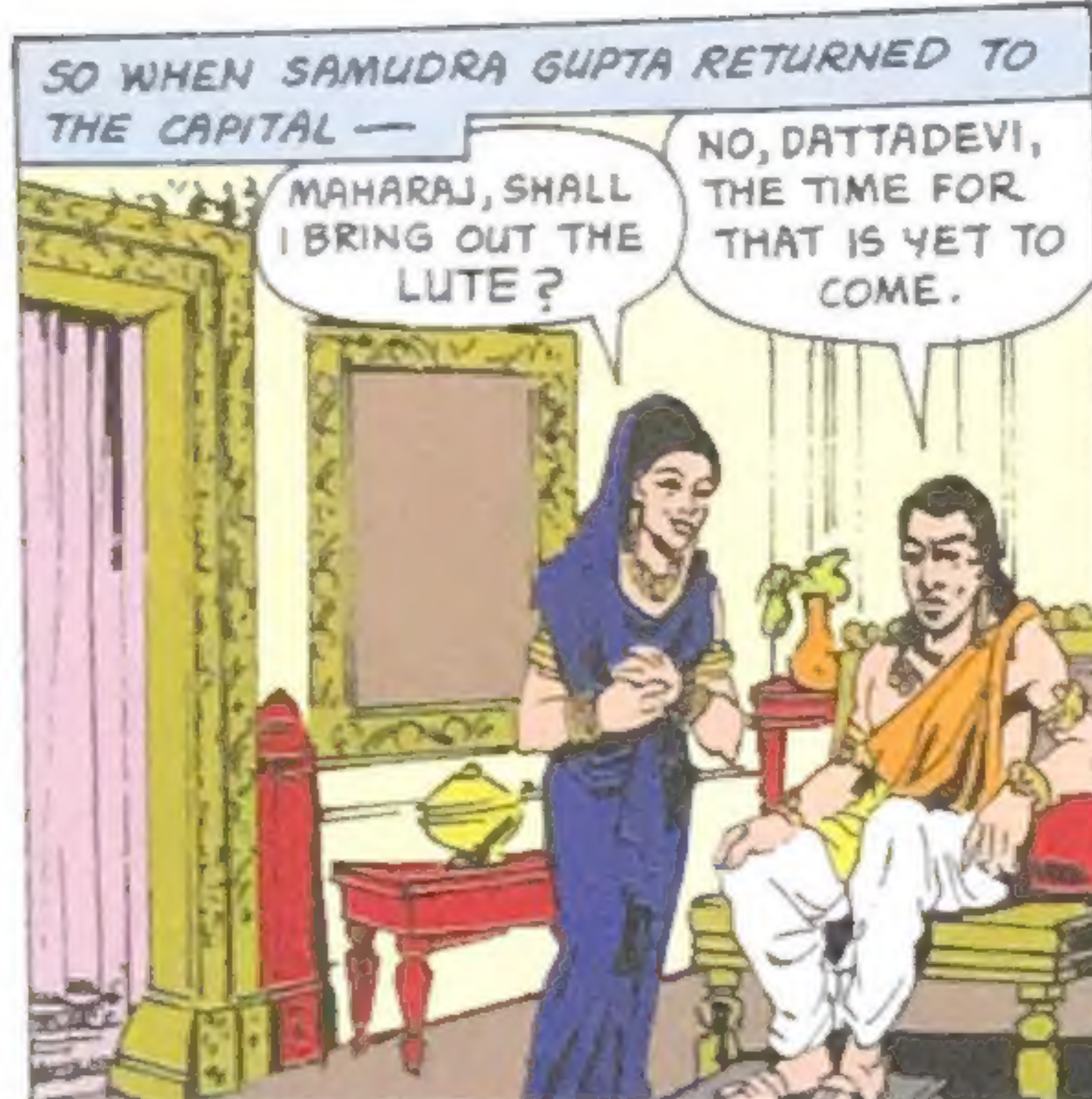
SAMUDRA GUPTA WON THE BATTLE AND TOOK THE THREE KINGS CAPTIVE.



THEIR TERRITORIES WERE ANNEXED TO THE GUPTA KINGDOM.

AS SAMUDRA GUPTA RODE BACK TO THE CAPITAL —





SO WHEN SAMUDRA GUPTA RETURNED TO THE CAPITAL —

MAHARAJ, SHALL I BRING OUT THE LUTE?

NO, DATTADEVI, THE TIME FOR THAT IS YET TO COME.

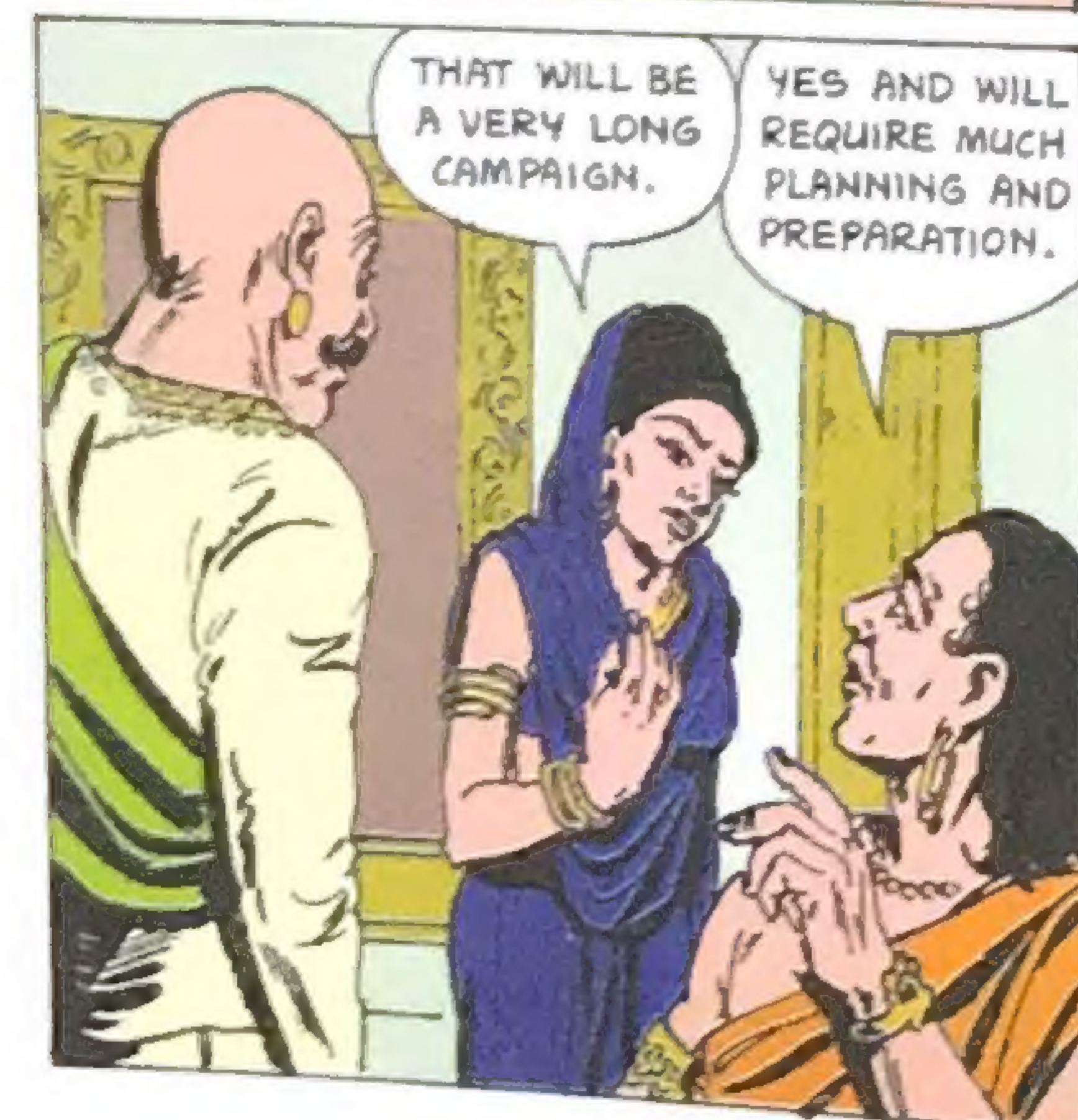


AH, DHRUVABHUTI! HAVE YOU DRAWN UP PLANS FOR THE CAMPAIGN?

CAMPAIGN?



YES, DEAR. I AM PLANNING TO TAKE OVER THE MADRAKA, YAUDHEYA, ARJUNAYANA, PRARJUNA, MALAVA, ABHIRA, SANAKANIKA, KAKA AND KHARAPARIKA REPUBLICS.



THAT WILL BE A VERY LONG CAMPAIGN.

YES AND WILL REQUIRE MUCH PLANNING AND PREPARATION.



THEN I SHALL NOT DISTURB YOU.

AND SO BEGAN THE MASSIVE OPERATIONS PREPARATORY TO A LONG CAMPAIGN.

MEANWHILE NEWS OF THE PREPARATIONS AND OF THE DEFEAT OF THE THREE KINGS SPREAD AND HAD A MOST UNEXPECTED RESULT. ONE DAY —



MAHARAJ, A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE YAUDHEYAS SEEKS AN AUDIENCE.

OH! I WILL SEE HIM AT COURT.



LATER —

OUR TRIBE OFFERS YOU TRIBUTE AS OUR MOST RESPECTED OVERLORD, AND SEEKS YOUR PROTECTION AND FRIENDSHIP AT ALL TIMES.



YOUR OFFER IS ACCEPTED IF YOU AGREE NOT TO WAGE WAR AMONG YOURSELVES OR WITH ANY OTHER WHO ENJOYS OUR PROTECTION.



AN OFFICIAL OF OUR COURT WILL BE PLACED IN YOUR REPUBLIC TO ENSURE PEACE AT ALL TIMES.

OVER THE NEXT FEW MONTHS, ONE BY ONE, EACH OF THE TRIBES CAME WITH THE SAME OFFER AND WAS GIVEN THE SAME REPLY. AND SO WITHOUT A STRUGGLE, WITHOUT ANY BLOODSHED, THE TRIBES BECAME FEUDAL STATES OF THE GROWING GUPTA POWER.

WHEN THE LAST OF THE REPRESENTATIVES
HAD COME AND GONE —

WHAT DO WE DO WITH ALL THE
MEN WE HAVE RALLIED... ALL THE
WEAPONS... ALL THE EQUIPMENT?



NOTHING IS LOST.
WE STILL GO ON OUR
CAMPAIGN. BUT WE
TAKE A DIFFERENT
ROUTE.



WE GO SOUTHWARDS
INSTEAD OF
WESTWARDS.

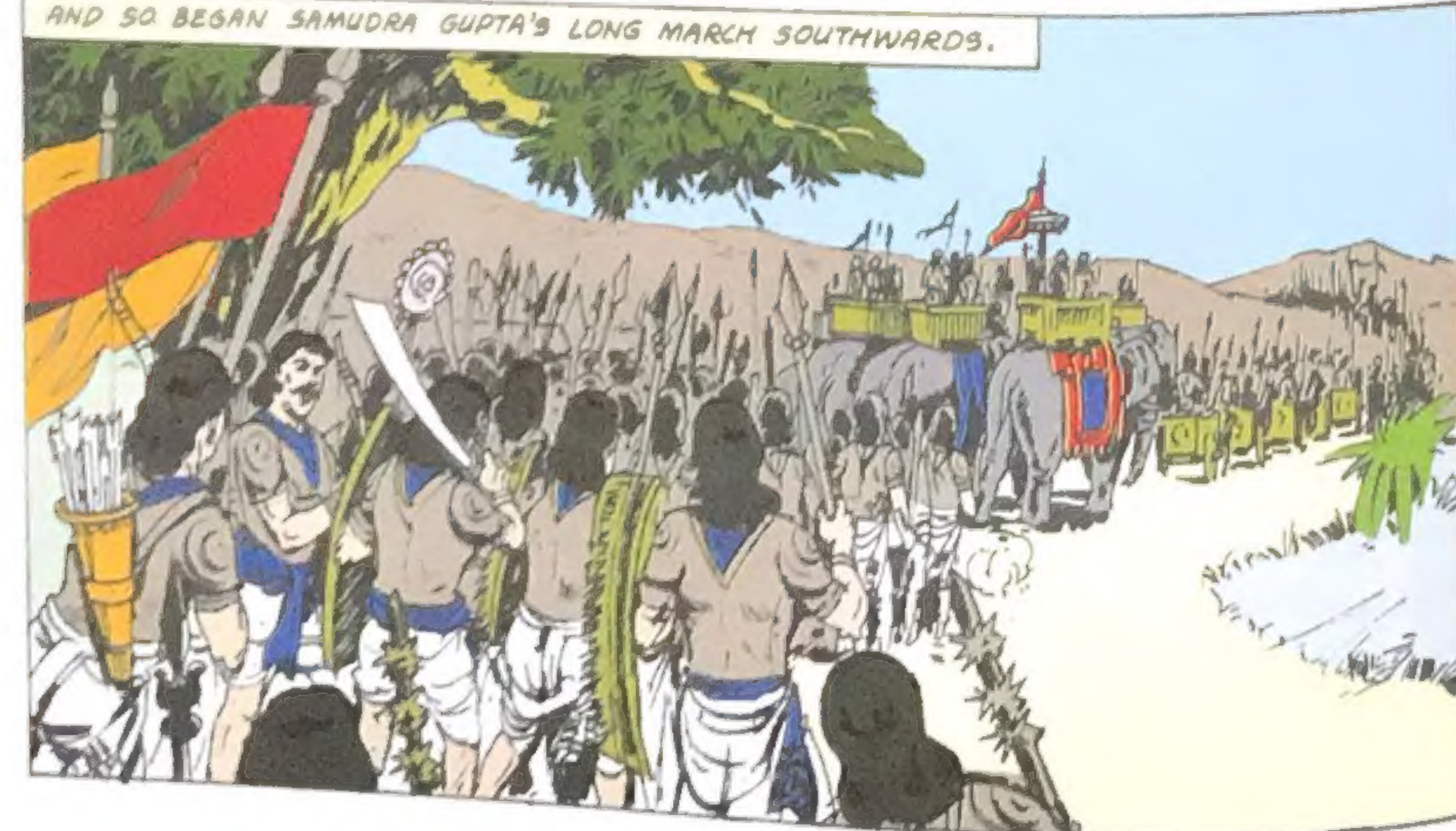


HARISHENA SHOOK HIS HEAD AND SMILED
TO HIMSELF.

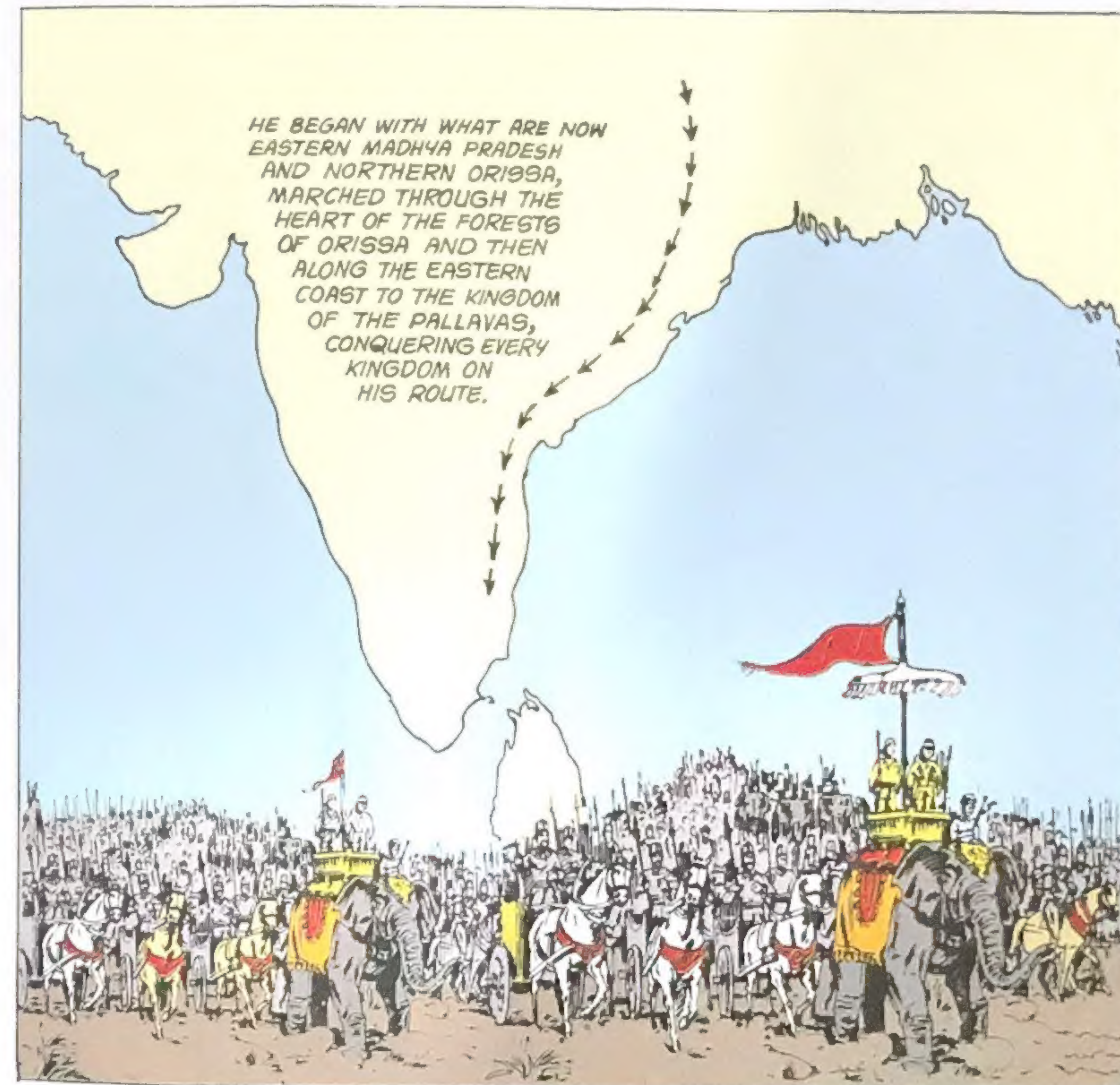
WELL, MAHARAJ.
I WILL NEVER
UNDERSTAND
YOU.



AND SO BEGAN SAMUDRA GUPTA'S LONG MARCH SOUTHWARDS.



HE BEGAN WITH WHAT ARE NOW
EASTERN MADHYA PRADESH
AND NORTHERN ORISSA,
MARCHED THROUGH THE
HEART OF THE FORESTS
OF ORISSA AND THEN
ALONG THE EASTERN
COAST TO THE KINGDOM
OF THE PALLAVAS,
CONQUERING EVERY
KINGDOM ON
HIS ROUTE.



AS HE WAS PREPARING TO MARCH FURTHER SOUTH, NEWS CAME FROM THE NORTH.

MAHARAJ, ACHYUTSENA AND
NAGASENA ARE PLANNING AN
UPRISING. THEY HAVE ALLIED
THEMSELVES WITH SIX OTHER
NAGA RAJAS UNDER
GANAPATINAGA OF
MATHURA.



SAMUDRA GUPTA WAS QUIET FOR A WHILE AS HE DID SOME QUICK REASONING. THEN—

HARISHENA. WE ARE TURNING BACK.



OUR CAMPAIGN WAS SUCCESSFUL. BUT STAYING BACK TO CONSOLIDATE OUR POSITION IS NOT POSSIBLE. NOT NOW, NOR IN THE FUTURE.



I HAVE DECIDED TO REINSTATE THE KINGS WITH ALL POWERS AND SETTLE FOR AN ANNUAL TRIBUTE FROM THEM.



SAMUDRA GUPTA RETRACED HIS ROUTE...



...SET THE KINGS BACK ON THEIR THRONES, ON HIS TERMS...

... AND AT LAST REACHED HIS CAPITAL TO MAKE PREPARATIONS FOR THE BATTLE AHEAD.

HARISHENA, I HAVE MADE UP MY MIND.

ABOUT WHAT NOW?



WE WILL ATTACK THE NAGAS BEFORE THEY ATTACK US. I HAVE BEEN TOO LENIENT WITH THEM.



THEY ARE A SERIOUS THREAT TO OUR DREAMS OF AN EMPIRE OF PEACE AND PLenty.



THIS TIME I WILL EXTERMINATE THEM, PERFORM AN ASHWAMEDHA SACRIFICE AND ESTABLISH THE SUZERAINTY OF OUR EMPIRE.

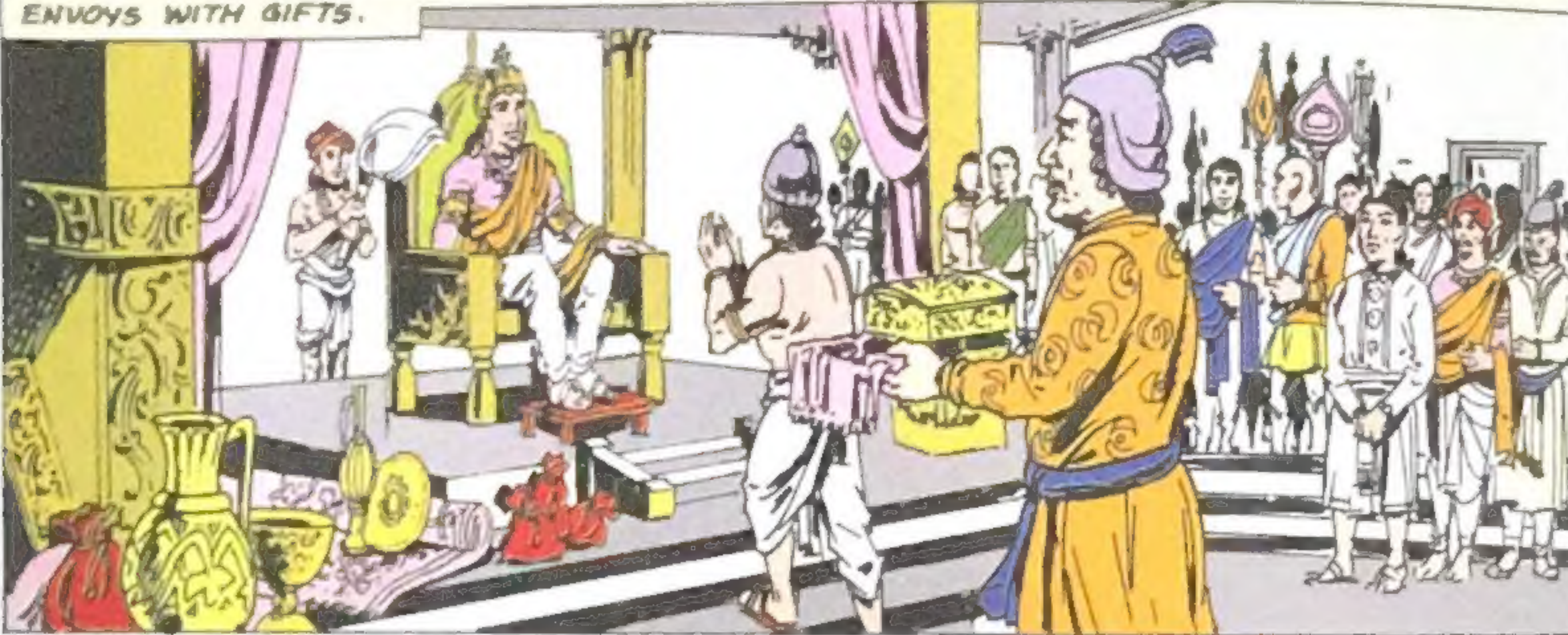


AND TRUE TO HIS WORD, HE RUTHLESSLY ATTACKED AND SLEW THE OFFENDERS...

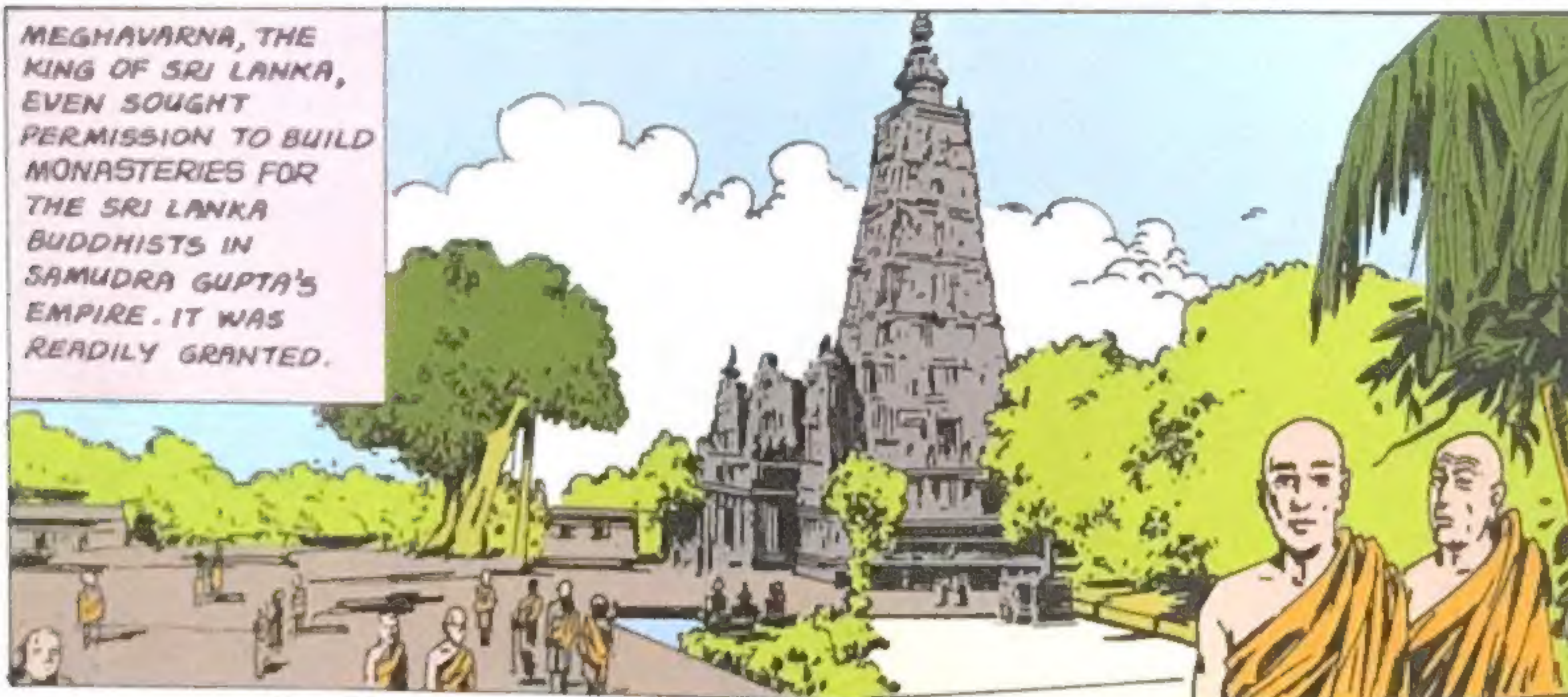


... TOOK OVER THEIR ARMIES AND ANNEXED THEIR TERRITORIES.

ON RETURNING TO HIS CAPITAL, HE PERFORMED THE ASHWAMEDHA SACRIFICE, TO WHICH KINGS FROM PARTS OF AFGHANISTAN, PERSIA, SRI LANKA AND SOUTH-EAST ASIA SENT THEIR ENVOYS WITH GIFTS.



MEGHAVARNA, THE KING OF SRI LANKA, EVEN SOUGHT PERMISSION TO BUILD MONASTERIES FOR THE SRI LANKA BUDDHISTS IN SAMUDRA GUPTA'S EMPIRE. IT WAS READILY GRANTED.



WHEN ALL THE RITUALS AND FESTIVITIES CAME TO AN END —



IN THE LAST TEN YEARS OF HIS REIGN, SAMUDRA GUPTA SAW HIS DREAM BECOME A REALITY. THE ORDER AND STABILITY HE HAD BROUGHT ABOUT, PAVED THE WAY FOR CHANDRA GUPTA II, HIS SON BORN OF DATTADEVI, TO CARRY THE GUPTA GLORY TO ITS ZENITH. LITERATURE AND THE ARTS FLOURISHED, EARNING THE GUPTA AGE THE EPITHET "GOLDEN".

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